

KERYGMA AND EMPOWERMENT

A Professional Project
submitted to the faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont
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the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Ministry

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD DOES NOT CONSIST IN TALK BUT IN POWER.

St. Paul

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ABSTRACT

There is a new concern in our society with empowerment and personal power. The Christian church traditionally finds it difficult to affirm people in their own power because God alone was absolutely powerful and church members were expected to be obedient to God's will. Process Theology, among others, has challenged such a notion affirming that God only has power to persuade, not to coerce. However, people must deal with the psychology of power and the structures of modern human society in order to be powerful. In our society, networks of mutually supportive individuals and institutions are becoming increasingly influential over against hierarchical forms of government which consume disproportional amounts of resources for their own maintenance.

Mark's Empty Tomb Story (Mark 16:1-8) consummates his Gospel of Jesus, a very powerful and empowering person. Not only were individuals, especially women, empowered in unprecedented ways, but from Jesus life and continuing influence his story has become the one alternative to heroism in our Western civilization. Thus, in an unexpected way, Jesus and his life have been a powerful influence on our human society beyond measure.

A Korean-American sermon by Rev. Joon young Lee of Valencia, California, and a sermon by Dr. Peggy Basset of Huntington Beach, California are examples of very empowering sermons in very different settings.

INTRODUCTION

This study intends to develop fragments for a concept of ministry as empowerment. At stake is a very practical and very basic problem in ministry: Why do we even go to church, what do we find there that will be of value to us?

Depending on our perspective and social surrounding this question can be rephrased in many different ways. The Christian message (kerygma) may be understood as addressing problems of hunger, survival, shelter, war and peace, unemployment, social acceptance, environmental issues, psychological well-being, social justice, healing of body and mind, pursuit of happiness, social transformation, incarnation, eschatology, expansion of consciousness, one's personal relationship with God and this world, and many more. This study is concerned with empowerment in ministry. An approach and resources are outlined in Chapter I.

The concerns raised in Chapter I are then examined against two kinds of documents in the following two chapters, one pericope of Scripture from early Christianity (Chapter II) and two sermons from contemporary Christianity (Chapter III).

The pericope Mark 16:1-8 is central not only to Mark's theology, but also to our own theological heritage and identity, because on this text among others do we build our understanding of Jesus' cross and resurrection and our understanding of salvation.

The two sermons selected for Chapter III were exceptional examples of an empowering ministry. For this study I was not looking for sermons of excellence in form or rhetoric, but for sermons which reflect and support empowering ministry. While the settings of the sermons were carefully selected, the particular sermons were chosen at random as examples of what one will find in those settings on a regular basis rather than on special occasions.

The documents from the Korean Congregation in Valencia, California, may stand as an example for contemporary Christianity in that it represents a phenomenon of our present generation: it represents an intercultural local parish of mixed Eastern and Western heritage, it represents local church ministry as it is going on increasingly among ethnic minorities in this country, that is ethnic minority ministry done in self-governance of the congregation alongside other congregations; it represents a growing ministry of mission and outreach, priorities

currently recognized by many of the mainline denominations in the U.S. and explicitly sanctioned and supported by the United Methodist Church¹ of which the Korean Congregation in Valencia, California, is a fully integrated member.

Because the Korean sermons speak to us across a barrier of language and culture, three additional sermons are included in the appendix of this study to serve as a reader; two of these are also sermons by Rev. Joon Young Lee, one is by Rev. Tae Hee Park, one of the most respected Korean-American preachers in the Los Angeles area.

The sermon by Dr. Basset is, I believe, an example of a very alive church in the avantgarde of those who affirm qualities I discuss in Chapter I from a Christian perspective and with integrity.

All sermons were transcribed from tape recordings.

¹ cf. "The United Methodist Church's Single Missional Priority: Ethnic Minority Local Church". *Daily Christian Advocate*, Roundup Edition 5:14 (April 26, 1980) 4.

This study reflects a quest for a ministry which is viable and at the same time relevant and which can be pursued with integrity. The limitations are clearly set in the personal perspective and resources of the writer. I am not an expert in New Testament studies or Asian studies or psychology, but very few of us who do ministry are, and thus I dare to assert the need to deal with all of these on a practical level.

CHAPTER I

A MINISTRY OF EMPOWERMENT

A NEW CONCERN WITH PERSONAL POWER

The problem of power is the problem of the quality of our lives
Bernard M. Loomer¹

The word *empowerment* is not a very frequent word in our common language. Looking in current literature, magazines and books, one is not likely to come across it very often. However, other words from the family with the Old French root *pouvoir* are used quite frequently, especially the word *power* itself. Besides the never ceasing dealings of our culture with political and societal power, there is a new concern widespread in this country with personal power: how to hold one's own power to fully express oneself and how to use it for success in one's career and personal life.

This concern manifests itself largely in popular psychology and much discussion of issues of power is found there. *Increase Personal Power* is the title of a mail-order tape, inviting users to "tap the awesome power of

¹ Bernard M. Loomer, "Two Kinds of Power," *Criterion* 15:1 (Winter 1976) 13.

your subconscious through subliminal stimulation"². To give an example of this usage, I chose at random the December 1984 issue of *Psychology Today*. All of the three main features in this magazine address an issue of personal power in one way or the other. The titles are, *Attractiveness, Power Holders, and Personality*. The article that deals with *Power Holders* bears the title *The View from the Top; Successful Use of Power Corrupts How We See Those We Control*³ and gives an example of using the word *empower* in the context of a concern for personal power:

No one wants to be powerless. Psychologist Rollo May observed that people who are unwilling or unable to use power condemn themselves to lives of frustration. Many psychologists advocate and teach ways to *empower* such people, to increase their control over life, to make them more assertive.⁴

This is what is meant by the word *power*, taking control of one's own life and taking influence in decision

² so advertised by Advanced Learning Systems, Inc., 7236-D Owensmouth Ave., Dept. PT28, Canoga Park, CA 91303.

³ David Kipnis, "The View from the Top; Successful Use of Power Corrupts How We See Those We Control," *Psychology Today* 18:12 (December 1984) 30-36.

⁴ *ibid.*, 30.

making. Such power is not something that is denied to people by authorities or superiors as much as it is a new frontier for individuals to remove their own psychological barriers from holding on to power. Mostly, this refers to the way of interacting in relationships as becomes clear from another quote from the same article:⁵

To determine who held the power in each relationship, we asked who made the final decisions about important issues such as how and where to spend money, their sex lives, their life-style and their friendships.

This use of the word *power* is not limited to adults. In a different article in the same magazine Maya Pines applies it to children in her article *Children's Winning Ways*:⁶

Some children are naturally skilled at silent persuasion. Their reward: Affection and Power.

This may seem a rather limited outlook on such a large issue as power when we consider its importance in

⁵ *ibid.*, 32.

⁶ Maya Pines, "Children's Winning Ways" *Psychology Today* 18:12 (December 1984) 58.

ministry. One may say that there are more pressing needs for the church to attend to than boosting the self-confidence of ego-centric individualists in an organization which already all too often lacks effective outreach.

However, I believe that the local church faces a growing malady if it does not take these issues seriously and find ways to respond to them theologically and practically in a fashion that can embrace and affirm individuals in their quest for more personal power.

THE POWER OF GOD AND FREE WILL IN THE CHURCH

No freedom of the will for good can be claimed. The will itself remains, for even though man has no power to do the good, it is "by will, not by compulsion" that he acts wickedly.

John Calvin⁷

I have found little or no vocalization of concern with personal power in church publications. Quite the opposite language is mostly applied, that is language of serving and obedience. Thus is the prevalent self-understanding of Christians, based on Paul's statement in Romans 13:1-5:

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore he who resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgement. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of him who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain; he is the servant of God to execute his wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must

⁷ as quoted by Geoffrey W. Bromley, *Historical Theology / An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 250.

be subject, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

This "pecking order" of clearly defined super- and sub-jection has become synonymous with the word *hierarchy* ("holy rule") as the divinely conceived order of relationships, with God at the absolute top, followed by holy men, later women (Ephesians 5:22: "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord"⁸) and then the "lower" creation. Power in this hierarchy resided absolutely in God and was borrowed from him (male) only on his behalf.

A central, and perhaps the central, notion in the traditional idea of God in Western thought has been the notion that God controls, or at least could control, every detail of the events in the world. This has been taken as belonging to the defining essence of "God" - a being would not be God, it is said, if it did not have this power. In popular thought and piety this notion has generally been held in a less rigorous form than articulated by the theologians. The theologians held that God actually controlled every detail of every event. No matter how much some of them tried to soften the impact of this doctrine by subtle distinctions and definitions, this was the common teaching of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Gottfried Leibniz, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Jonathan Edwards, and Karl Barth.⁹

⁸ All Scripture quotations in this study, unless specified differently, are taken from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible / Revised Standard Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

⁹ David Ray Griffin, *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976) 16f.

This position reflects a long theological tradition which makes it difficult in our generation to find a new approach to incorporate into our Christian lives a concern which is widespread around us and which many of us neither can nor want to ignore: A new form of individuals taking responsibility for their own life and for their co-creation of what is and for participation in the creative process. But such attempts stand in conflict with millennia of Christian teaching about free will - or rather about its non-existence. Free will was not in accordance with an omnipotent Christian God. And this conflict is becoming a more pressing issue in our generation than ever before. Many people are no longer willing to accept a call by the church to deny the existence of personal free will and freedom of decision, to identify with a position like that of Martin Luther, to name an example, that "*there can be no 'free-will' in man, or angel, or in any creature*".¹⁰ Luther even goes so far as to say:

¹⁰ Martin Luther, *On the Bondage of the Will* (New York: Revell, 1957) 786 (Weimarer Ausgabe).
cf. Griffin, 105.

I frankly confess that, for myself, even if it could be, I should not want "free-will" to be given me, nor anything to be left in my own hands to enable me to endeavor after salvation.¹¹

For Martin Luther this stance was not a powerless one, of course, but rather a seeing himself in a certain place in the hierarchical order, different in the realms of the world and God. As far as his personal power was concerned he was not unlike John Wesley two centuries later, who believed in corporate decision-making and at the same time reserving the final say for himself.

The strongest attacks against quietism and submissiveness in Christian piety have not come, however, from popular psychologists. It took events on a much larger scale to make an impact on such aged modes of thought and life. Whereas in the history of Western thought and in the political arena, individualism has had a firm stand since the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, the Christian churches have much longer maintained "hier"-archical structures of decision-making. The events that made a no-

¹¹ Luther, p. 783 (Weimarer Ausgabe)

ticeable impact had to be of as large a scale as European Nazi-pogrom, Latin American Junta dictatorships, and the resulting liberation movements as they have emerged there, in South Africa, and in the United States where blacks have for many generations fought their own way to justice and liberation, followed by women and now by minority liberation authors and theologians.

Of the more influential liberation movements, feminism is the one that brings to us most closely a look at the structures of society in which we function. The women's movement is the one that least of all can be ignored as irrelevant or confined to a ghetto because everyone of us is affected by it. And whatever it has taught us about ways in which women were oppressed and kept under restrictions by men and by the way our social life has been structured, is also relevant to their male counterparts. And while the quest for liberation does not end there, but will eventually have to become a quest for the *Liberation of Life*¹², the issues brought to our life are very relevant to the current life of local churches.

¹² so the title of Charles Birch and John B. Cobb, Jr., *The Liberation of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

An example for a feminist viewpoint can be found by Mary Daly in her chapter on *The Original Sin of Women*:¹³

... A third effect of women's original sin is false "humility", which is an internalization of masculine opinion in an androcentric society. This means never aspiring "too high"; imposing on the self a strangely ambivalent fear of success as Matina Horner has shown. This avoidance of success is rooted partially in guilt feelings over being a "rival" to males or "threatening the male ego". Such false humility is expressed not only individually but collectively, as when women's organizations publicly expose such attitudes of self-depreciation and even act politically to impose them upon other women. A striking example of such an organization is the National Council of Catholic Women, which opposed the Equal Rights Amendment. Some spokeswomen expressed fear that the amendment was "a threat to the nature of woman". Such organizations function as a kind of super-ego, saying "No" to personal achievement and pride.

What Mary Daly says here describes her perspective on an anti-personal achievement sentiment that males have paid a price for in their own way. Saying "No" to pride and personal achievement has a history in Christianity as old as Christianity itself. Paul said, "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord"¹⁴, and since then many out-

¹³ Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father / Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973) 53.

¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 1:31.

standing theologians have considered "the Biblical definition of basic sin as pride", to quote Reinhold Niebuhr¹⁵. While for the best among the theologians such expressions were part of quite elaborate and quite impressive conceptions of freedom¹⁶, in the dealings of the local church there is rarely room for personal achievement and affirmation within the need to keep people "beholden"¹⁷ to the institution.

¹⁵ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941, 1964) I, 186.

¹⁶ so for Niebuhr, of course, to speak against pride is only part of his advocacy for human freedom, and the undue self-concern as an expression of human evil is a corruption of its own essential freedom (cf. *ibid.*, viii)

¹⁷ cf. Dr. Peggy Basset's sermon "And We Jumped", page 152.

PERSUASIVE POWER: PROCESS THEOLOGY

Religion will not regain its old power until it can face change in the same spirit as does science.

Alfred North Whitehead¹⁸

Many of the efforts that have come to local churches from women's concerns are almost too much for them to handle, let alone incorporate, e.g., the efforts for inclusive language in worship. More safety may seem to lie in new theological approaches from Process thought. If they are less upsetting, however, this may be so only because its suggestions, based on the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, are more abstract in language and their implications not as immediately visible. Talk about the "primordial and the consequent nature of God" may pass by an audience more easily than praying to "our heavenly Mother-Father".

Process Theology, however, has quite revolutionary things to say about power, the power of God, and creaturely freedom.

¹⁸ Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: Free Press, 1925, 1953) 189.

In process thought every actual entity, every event has an element of self-determination and cannot be completely determined externally. Likewise God's power over creatures is not controlling but persuasive and thus not out of a moral choice of God's, but out of metaphysical necessity.¹⁹ Let me refer back to David Griffin whom I have already quoted above. Griffin distinguishes between coercive power and persuasive power. Coercive power can by the inherent nature of actuality be imposed only on bodies ("aggregates") whereas individual entities can only be persuaded and not coerced into anything without their participation and cooperation, without the subjection of their subjective aim and self-determination.

This is a view that stands in sharp contradiction to traditional Christian theology and it is held with a very strong philosophical perspective in that such self-determination in every event is a universal necessity because of which it is necessarily the case that God cannot control the creatures.

Power has often been understood as if it were

¹⁹ cf. Griffin, 276.

measured by the incapacity to resist on the part of that on which it is wielded. The potter exercises upon the clay a very great amount of power in this sense. The clay is equally malleable into any one of innumerable forms, and the decision as to how it is to be shaped is solely that of the potter. Apart from his skills the only limits to his power are the nature of the clay and the quantity at hand. Those eager to glorify divine power have argued that even these limits do not apply to God's relation with the world. In this view God dealt with no given material but rather willed the very clay into being out of nothing. The divine omnipotence is taken to mean that there is only one power, namely God, and that all else is wholly powerless. With such a view God is fully responsible for all sin, and if he chooses to hold his powerless creatures accountable, this adds further injustice to his cruelty.

What is often not recognized is that this view not only slanders the moral character of God but also attributes to him very little power. He is seen as omnipotent in the sense of being the only power there is; but where there is no competing power, omnipotence means little. ...The only power capable of any worthwhile result is the power of persuasion. ... The power that counts is the power to influence the exercise of power by others. ...Compulsion can be exercised on others only in proportion to their powerlessness. Persuasion is the means of exercising power upon the powerful.²⁰

This view is quite radical if compared with most of our day-to-day experience. There the margins for influencing others by persuasion often seem hopelessly small and negligible, and the complexities of influences

²⁰ John B. Cobb, Jr., *God and the World* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969) 89f.

seem so impenetrable that coercion seems to be more the reality among established powerful people than persuasion. The higher people climb on corporate or political ladders, the more they seem compelled to submit to multiplicity of pressures in order to stay in their position.

Nevertheless, process philosophy points out very clearly the freedom of anyone at any time to deviate by choice from those pressures that seem coercive, but only so because we participate with them.

The process view does not imply that creatures are not dependent upon God for their existence, but this dependence is not and cannot be one of completely and in every detail being controlled by God for the way things are. Rather, "process theology understands God precisely as the basic source of unrest in the universe"²¹, the one who mediates to the world not the status quo but new possibilities and lures every single event to higher realizations of enjoyment.

Process thought takes a different than traditional

²¹ Cobb, John B., Jr., and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology / An Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976) 59.

approach to the power of God and power generally because of its cosmology. Process thought holds that anything actual is in process, in fact, that to be actual is to be a process. Anything which is not a process is an abstraction from process, not a full-fledged actuality.²² The real individual occasions of which the temporal process is made are themselves processes. They are not things that endure through a tiny bit of time unchanged, but take a bit of time to become. Whitehead calls this becoming "concre-scence". And within this becoming every actual entity is partially self-creative, takes control of its own existence, completing itself out of the multiplicity of past feelings into a unified experience. Whitehead states:

All actual entities share with God this character of self-causation. For this reason every actual entity also shares with God the characteristics of transcending all other actual entities, including God.²³

This is a statement that would be very upsetting to most local churches to hear from the pulpit because

²² *ibid.*, 14.

²³ Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1978) 222.

there seems to be so much appeal to the idea that our perfect father in heaven need not grow as all human parents do. On the other hand, the theological assertion that God be the "unmoved mover", the unchanging same from eternity to eternity leaves an unbridgeable gap of hopelessness that anything we creatures do could make the least difference to such a God.

Charles Hartshorne has devoted long studies to the argument that a doctrine of an unchanging God is deeply inadequate as compared to one of a God who is continuously growing in God's own perfection.²⁴ His doctrine of God takes account of our human need for a God who responds to us and is affected by us and only thus is in genuine relationship with us.

Many great persons have voiced the heretic view, by classical standards, that God is affected by what we do and, in fact, grows himself. An example is the poet Rainer Maria Rilke who wrote "Even if we don't want to: God grows", and: "with my growing your Kingdom grows".²⁵

²⁴ cf. Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1962)

²⁵ Rainer (René) Maria Rilke, *Das Stundenbuch* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1982), 11, 18 and 75, translation mine.

Bernard Loomer in his article *Two Kinds of Power*²⁶ describes in terms closer to everyday life the need for a view of power as receptive.

When power is defined in a unilateral or linear fashion as a capacity to influence another, it follows factually as well as logically that the gain in power by the other is experienced as a loss of one's own power and therefore of one's status and sense of worth. ... To be influenced by someone or something other is therefore experienced as a weakness, just as the dependence on another is a reflection of our inadequacy or lack of self-sufficiency.²⁷ ...

The second and alternative conception of power is relational in character. This is the ability both to produce and to undergo an effect. ...It has as one of its premises the notion that the capacity to absorb an influence is as truly a mark of power as is the strength involved in exerting an influence.²⁸ ...Our readiness to take account of the feelings and values of another is a way of including the other within our world of meaning and concern. At its best, receiving is not unresponsive passivity; it is active openness. ...It requires strength to absorb an effect. ... In some such manner we feed upon each other. ...The more deeply mutual and creative the relationship, the wider the range of emergent possibilities for those participating in the relationship.

The concluding sentence of this quote, "The more deeply mutual and creative the relationship, the wider the

²⁶ Loomer, 12-29.

²⁷ *ibid.*, 15f.

²⁸ *ibid.*, 20.

range of emergent possibilities for those participating in the relationship" must be applied to all living beings, including God as well as the smallest units of our ecological environment. And the way we conceive the power of God will both impact, and reflect on, the way we relate to power among us in the local church.

AN ISSUE OF GROWING FAITH: POWER AND AUTHORITY

Reporting on a study of TV industry decision-makers, he said that 95 percent seldom or never attend a church service and 45 percent express no religious preference.

Rev. Donald Wildmon²⁹

I believe that one of the reasons, why there is so much dissatisfaction with the church, so much hesitation to go to worship is because there is a shift in many people in the way they relate to authority. And I believe this has to do with the close association of power with authority.

The highest authority is ascribed to God in traditional theology along with total power: the Almighty and the Supreme Judge are one. In the same vein, the dictionary definition of "empowerment" gives a first meaning from legal terminology, namely "to invest with legal power; authorize", and only secondly does it give the meaning,

²⁹ "Proposes New Social Concerns Board" *The Interpreter / A Mutual Ministry Publication for United Methodist Leaders* 28:7 (October 1984) 22.

"to enable or permit", which in its second half is still connected with authority³⁰.

Along with the theological affirmation of God being the Supreme Authority and Judge, there is usually in the local churches the affirmation that the local church is corporately subject to God Almighty and decisions are made more or less corporately by acting as God's stewards over the given talents, in accordance with the parable of Matthew 25:14-30 and parallel Luke 19:11-27.

Thus it is that Dr. Chang Soon Lee said in a sermon:

Whatever we have is not ours but belongs to God. We are nothing but stewards and care-takers of God's possessions. Because of this we decided to have as our theme for November that we are only stewards, the keepers of God's possessions.³¹

Such a sense of stewardship can be very empowering to a local church or, and that is the other side of it, it can be quite hampering if it goes hand in hand with a view

³⁰ Peter Davies (ed.) *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Dell, 1969, 1976) 236.

³¹ Dr. Chang Soon Lee of Wilshire United Methodist Church, Los Angeles, in his sermon "Make the Most of the Time" on November 4, 1984.

that, since God is the sole possessor of everything, God also be the only one who deserves recognition.

Johann Sebastian Bach wrote at the end of all his compositions *S. D. G.*, which stands for *solī deo gloria* (honor to God alone), thus doing as Paul suggests in the above quoted statement, "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord" [add: "alone"]³². (Ironically, while Bach was still alive he did in fact not receive much honor and it was only much later that Bach, as many others, was recognized for the genius he was.)

Bach's compositions inspire to awe and worship, and it is part of his greatness that his personal honor do not get in the way between his audience and God. But most of us church-goers are not geniuses who can wait for posterity to glorify us despite our humility in our lifetime. And I am positive, neither Paul nor Bach intended their audiences to be crushed by self-worthlessness, as I did when I grew up, thinking that in God's judgement all my thoughts were only evil from the time I was young.³³

³² 1 Corinthians 1:31.

³³ taking literally Genesis 8:21, where Yahwe says in response to Noah's sacrifice, "Never again will I put the earth under a curse because of what man does; I know that from the time he is young his thoughts are evil." *Good News Bible / The Bible in Today's English*

The distinction is between a humility that is disguised worthlessness and a humility which can embrace personal power and achievement because all belongs to God who embraces every person along with all our achievements. Such a humility can know and confess that it needs not to take away from a recognition of these achievements.

In the reality of most local churches, however, opportunities for giving praise to personal achievement often seem to be narrowly curbed by the need for conformity and subordination into a mentality of servant/slave stewardship.³⁴ Praised are only such accomplishments which lie within a narrow scope of accomplishment of the church as a communal body or are irrelevant to it. E. g., most churches are quite responsive to such occasions in the life of their members as birthdays, contributions to the program and to the budget, and family events, but they leave out accomplishments of personal development, spiritual search, rehabilitation, career changes, political and

Version (New York: American Bible Society, 1976).

³⁴ cf. Dan D. Rhoades, "Stewardship: From Servant/Slaves to Joint-Heirs," (unpublished paper, School of Theology at Claremont, 1984)

social involvement and successes, changes in family situations such as divorces, separations, homosexual relations and others labeled as somehow disagreeable.

Should be praised in the church only what furthers the cohesiveness and conformity in the church community? And who decides what that is? Is it a matter of democracy in the church where some corporate body has the say, or is it a matter of pragmatics and of what works best, or is it a matter of values, beliefs and theology? Or, after all, is it a growth issue that changes significantly when approached from a widened perspective?

James W. Fowler has done extensive research, approaching human faith from developmental psychology. In his book *Stages of Faith*³⁵ he identifies six stages in the development of faith and one of the prominent indicators of these stages is the *Locus of Authority* in a person's faith. A critical shift in the *Locus of Authority* in a person's life occurs when one's own judgement begins to be more decisive than approval and sanctioning by others. In Fowler's stage three of faith development, authority in a

³⁵ James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith, The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981)

person's life resides in the "consensus of a valued group and in personally worthy representatives of belief-value traditions" whereas in stage four it resides in "one's own judgement as informed by a self-ratified ideological perspective. Authorities and norms must be congruent with this."³⁶.

Fowler gives an example for this in a case study on a person called Mary.³⁷

Authority for Mary during most of the twenty-two to twenty-seven age period was located externally to herself. First, and most powerfully, it was located in God's will. Regarding the interpretation of God's will, however, it was located in persons on whom she depended for love, emotional support and guidance. Authority was located in scripture (in highly selective passages, which were usually brought to her attention by valued others and made salient by their resonance with her immediate existential situation).

Empowerment is then very distinct and different for someone who lives with external authorities as compared to those who claim autonomous authority over their own life. James Fowler says in another place in the same book that

³⁶ ibid., 244.

³⁷ ibid., 243.

In many ways religious institutions "work best" if they are people with a majority of committed folk best described by Stage 3 (external authority).³⁸

This is so because people who rely on external authority are in need for groups which offer a consensus into which they can incorporate themselves, and for ministers who will be worthy representatives of that belief-value system. Most churches function in this way and find their support from people who depend on the church to provide an environment of trust, a consensus of belonging, authority and world-coherence, nurture for mutual interpersonal relationships, and forms of worship to meet the need for meaningful symbols.

By comparison, people who move towards claiming their autonomous authority over their own life see a requirement of conformity as a threat to their individuality. They want different qualified opinions rather than consensus, from which to be more informed about their own opinions and beliefs. They will not recognize a minister's authority just because they trust her/him, but apply their

³⁸ ibid., 164.

standards and qualifications to what s/he communicates. They also tend to be frustrated if the makings of the church are not seen in a wider societal perspective. They would rather have informative clarification than simple answers to complex realities. They want an interactive, informative mutuality rather than a mutuality of belonging to the church by identifying with its values and consensus.

One might think that, if there is such a phenomenon as a developmental shift in the locus of authority, such would not make a significant impact on the life of a local church. However, Fowler's statistical analysis shows that a majority of people relate to authority in the church (as in their environment) in one of the two ways. Almost two thirds of a somewhat representative sample of interviewees were described by stage-categories in the transition from internal to external locus of authority and the adjacent stages. Of the thirteen to twenty-year-olds, 50% were described by stage 3 (external locus of authority) with only 5.4% in stage 4 (internal locus of authority), whereas of the twenty-one to thirty-year-olds 40% were described by stage 4 with 33.3% in transition and only 17.8% remaining in stage 3.³⁹ In other words, roughly

two thirds of a given group of people have a relevant issue in external versus internal authority, and many of those who have developed a functional attitude in their lives of being autonomously responsible and in control of their affairs become strong advocates for such personal autonomy: "Success comes to those who feel in command of their lives."⁴⁰

Along with the shift of the locus of authority from group consensus and respected others to one's own informed judgement, there is a shift in the way a person belongs to a congregation. Fowler identifies six other aspects of a person's life which can be expected to change also at about the same time. Of particular relevance to the life of a congregation are the change in the function of symbols in that symbols become separated from what is symbolized and their evocative power no longer inheres in the symbol itself but in the meaning conveyed by it.

For a minister this means that worship, liturgy, eucharist and baptism, to name the most important symbols

³⁹ *ibid.*, 318.

⁴⁰ *Psychology Today* 18:12 (December 1984) 2.

of the Christian church, take on a quite distinctly different function. For example, when administering the eucharist, it will be very important to people in the congregation who do not separate symbols from what they symbolize, that the minister not violate the symbols, be they bread and wine or grape juice or transsubstantiated wafers, while explaining their meaning. In fact, I heard of a minister who had read Fowler's book and then prepared a number of "stage three" sermons and subsequently was told by many how "much better" his sermons had recently been. On the other hand, people in the congregation who do separate symbols from their meanings will feel left out if a sacrament is administered without sufficient explanation of its meaning and "demythologization"--attacks may follow.

Other aspects in a person's life that can be expected to change at about the same time are perspective taking, form of moral judgement, bounds of social awareness and one's form of world coherence. A tacit system making sense of a world of interpersonal relationships widens into a societal awareness in which one chooses one's own norms and ideologically compatible communities.

Such a description would easily fit an upper middle-class suburban congregation consisting of members who have moved up in their careers and income, have chosen

a place for their families to live and then found such an "ideologically compatible" church to attend and belong to. In such a congregation a minister may be found who does not believe in the resurrection, heaven and hell, miracles, virgin birth, and more, but who can give qualified historical-critical accounts of Christianity and perhaps even of other religions, who is knowledgeable and can supply meaning to people who have debunked many symbols as "myths".

Such findings support Fowler's analysis that these issues have a developmental component. Also, if in part such issues are developmental in character, then to support and empower people is not to teach them a certain Christian way, but to promote and foster the process of learning and growing, the distinction lying in the recognition that different developmental stages call for different emphases in matters of conformity, authority, symbols, etc. For a particular congregation this means to pick and choose forms of ministry not only by theological or ideological preference or by what are perceived to be the needs of people to be "reached", but also by what is relevant to the personal development and growth of the people who engage in that ministry.

NEW FORMS OF POWER IN A NEW AGE

A leaderless but powerful network is working to bring about radical change in the United States. Its members have broken with certain key elements of Western thought, and they may even have broken continuity with history.

Marilyn Ferguson⁴¹

Marilyn Ferguson begins her book *The Aquarian Conspiracy* with the above quote. In that book she gives one of the most hopeful yet solidly grounded accounts of our national and global situation as a human race in the 1980's. It is truly a book of good news and Gospel, showing new ways and beginnings for us amidst the prevailing gloom in our generation.

The first concept she introduces is that of a *paradigm shift*. This term was introduced by Thomas Kuhn in his book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. The point about these shifts is that they do not come in slow, even process, but in intuitive leaps. To explain this, she gives the following illustration:

⁴¹ Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy / Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980's* (Los Angeles: Tarcher, 1980) 23.

As experienced by an individual, the paradigm shift might be compared to the discovery of the "hidden pictures" in children's magazines. You look at a sketch that appears to be a tree and a pond. Then someone asks you to look more closely - to look for something you had no reason to believe was there. Suddenly you see camouflaged objects in the scene: The branches become a fish or a pitchfork, the lines around the pond hide a toothbrush.

Nobody can talk you into seeing the hidden pictures. You are not *persuaded* that the objects are there. Either you see them or you don't. But once you have seen them, they are plainly there whenever you look at the drawing. You wonder how you missed them before.⁴²

Historic examples of important paradigm shifts are Copernicus', Galileo's, Pasteur's and Mesmer's whose new paradigms were received with invariable resistance and hostility.

Ferguson describes a new paradigm that is emerging in this decade that has great social and political implications and will not leave the ministry of local churches unaffected. The Christian theological tradition has argued for centuries that our well-being (salvation) depends on our faith, and so Ferguson reminds us that we determine which future we create by the views we hold and to be open

⁴² *ibid.*, 30.

to new possibilities of a new age. Quoting George Leonard she affirms that "the beginning of the most thoroughgoing change in the quality of human existence since the birth of civilized states does not entail throwing over our civilized values and practices but subsuming them under a higher order"⁴³, and, "once this journey has begun in earnest, there is nothing that can dissuade. No political movement, no organized religion commands greater loyalty."⁴⁴

Many local churches could well use a new paradigm and many people who feel they belong to the new Aquarian Age would welcome a new church to attend and support, to empower and be empowered by.

A church in line with the movement as Ferguson describes it would have a number of distinct characteristics. The first and most important is that it would be structured as a network, and, once again, this is an issue connected with power: "Networks reflects the fluctuating needs and interests of its members, but", she says, "the

⁴³ ibid., 59.

⁴⁴ ibid., 34.

essential intent is the redistribution of power"⁴⁵. But let me quote a few paragraphs from her excellent section on networks⁴⁶.

While most of our institutions are faltering, a twentieth century version of the ancient tribe or kinship has appeared: the network, a tool for the next step in human evolution.

Amplified by electronic communications, freed from the old restraints of family and culture, the network is the antidote to alienation. It generates power enough to remake society. It offers the individual emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and economic support. It is an invisible home, a powerful means of altering the course of institutions, especially government.

Anyone who discovers the rapid proliferation of networks and understands their strength can see the impetus for worldwide transformation. The network is the institution of our time: an open system, a dissipative structure so richly coherent that it is in constant flux, poised for reordering, capable of endless transformation. ...

Networks are cooperative, not competitive. They are true grass-roots: self-generating, self-organizing, sometimes even self-destructing. They present a process, a journey, not a frozen structure.⁴⁷

...Some focus on personal development, spiritual search, or rehabilitation of members; others address themselves primarily to social issues. ...Whatever their stated purpose, the function of most of these networks is mutual support and enrichment, empowerment

⁴⁵ ibid., 217.

⁴⁶ ibid., 213-221.

⁴⁷ ibid., 213.

of the individual, and cooperation to effect change. Most aim for a more humane, hospitable world.

In its rich opportunities for mutual aid and support, the network is reminiscent of its forbear, the kinship system. Yet the "family" in this case has formed on the basis of deeply held values and shared assumptions, bonds thicker than blood.

The network is a matrix for personal exploration and group action, autonomy and relationship. Paradoxically, a *network is both intimate and expansive*. Unlike vertical organizations, it can maintain its personal or local quality while ever growing. You don't have to choose between involvement on a community or global scale; you can have both.⁴⁸

These descriptions would sound too good to be true if it weren't for the fact that they are reports of what is going on already, and not vague ideas. I am reminded of what Dr. Howard Clinebell reported. He did a study alcoholism rehabilitation of American servicemen stationed in Germany. The study showed that all the efforts to help alcoholics were virtually futile without the contribution by the Alcoholics Anonymous or similar self-help groups. There it proved true that it is in helping others that one is helped, as Ferguson says also, and the way power is distributed is crucial for the effectiveness of such self-help groups:

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 214.

According to the National Self-Help Clearinghouse associated with the City University of New York, around fifteen million Americans now belong to networks in which people help each other deal with such diverse problems as retirement, widowhood, overweight, divorce, child abuse, drug abuse, gambling, emotional disorders, handicaps, political action, environmentalism, the death of a child. Such groups carefully keep from becoming too "professionalized" for fear that a hierarchy of authority may develop and their whole purpose would be defeated. For mutuality is essential. It is in helping others that one is helped.⁴⁹

Thus we find quite another argument for a reordering of our relationship to power than the ones we have listed before. Ferguson describes how the increasing complexity of organizations or organizational structures creates a growing potential for their sudden reordering, because the more complex their structure, the more energy is needed to maintain all their internal connections.

This phenomenon is a paradox of *dissipative structures*:

The more coherent or intricately connected the structure, the more unstable it is. Increased coherence means increased instability.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, 217; emphasis mine.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, 164; The theory of dissipative structures won the 1977 Nobel prize in chemistry for the Belgian physical chemist Ilya Prigogine. *Dissipative structures* are open systems, the form or

This new look at the dynamics of power has some particular applications to small numbers of people who want to make a difference. A minority of people that understands the potential for change in large structures can become a seed crystal and a catalyst to bring about that change. Matt Taylor, founder of the Renaissance Project, compared social reordering to the turning of a ship. In the past, people have tried to put the rudder on the front of the ship when tackling social issues, applying direction at the wrong places. "You can steer a large organization with subtle input."⁵¹

Further insights about power in complex structures comes from biology. Jose Arguelles compared such networks to the biological force of syntropy - the tendency of life energy toward greater association, communication, cooperation, awareness. "The network is like a collective body-

structure of which is maintained by a continuous dissipation (consumption) of energy. Much as water moves through a whirlpool and creates it at the same time, energy moves through and simultaneously forms the dissipative structure. All living things and some nonliving structures are dissipative structures. Cf. *ibid.*

⁵¹ cf. Ferguson, 221ff.

mind", he suggested.⁵² Ferguson says,

Comparing the network to the human nervous system is more than a handy metaphor. In a very real sense, the brain and a network operate similarly. The brain is more coalitional than hierarchical in its structure. Meaning in the brain is generated by dynamic patterns, coalitions of groups of neurons and interaction between groups. Power in the brain is decentralized.⁵³

Another characteristic a church of this kind would display is a different expectation of the role of the minister. Neither someone holding a position of personal respectability for the values of the community, nor the expert professional, but a participant in a mutual network who can model how to have work satisfaction without being a workaholic, how not to try to find meaning by working but who finds meaningful work.

...The contemporary individual struggles to find that higher purpose - to find meaning in work.

In the new paradigm, work is a vehicle for transformation. Through work we are fully engaged in life. Work can be what Milton Mayerhoff called "the appropriate other", that which requires us, which makes us care. In responding to vocation - the call,

⁵² cf. *ibid.*, 214.

⁵³ *ibid.*, 214f.

the summons of that which needs doing - we create and discover meaning, unique to each of us and always changing.⁵⁴

John Naisbitt in his book *Megatrends / Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives*⁵⁵ confirms Ferguson's descriptions that our societal structures are already proceeding in the direction from a society run by short-term considerations to considerations in much longer-term time frames, from institutional help to self-help, and from hierarchies to networking.

Such mega-considerations may seem way over the heads of what a local church deals with and the empowerment that can be actualized there, however, the title of this study is "Kerygma and Empowerment" and reflects not only on a theory of visionaries, but on what one finds when walking into a Christian Church on Sunday morning, what empowerment to expect from what can be heard there.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 342.

⁵⁵ John Naisbitt, *Megatrends / Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives* (New York: Warner Books, 1982)

CHAPTER II

EMPOWERMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT— A READING OF MARK'S EMPTY TOMB STORY

LISTENING TO THE ORIGINS:
JESUS' POWER

By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you the authority to do them?

Chief Priests, Scribes and Elders to Jesus¹

There is no question that Jesus was a very powerful person. The prominent leaders in Judea questioned him about his power and the masses flocked to him as they flock today to those who stand out, who shape the conditions around them far more than most of us, who live life with more energy and vigor. One hopes to learn something from a powerful person. Perhaps the way up in life is not just a matter of working one's way up some corporate or other ladder, not just talents that were inherited from the family, not just fate of what milieu and wealth or poverty one is born into. In all of us there is a hope and a knowledge that life is about learning and growing and that there is a vast hidden potential in all of us waiting to be actualized.

¹ Mark 11:28, parallel Matthew 21:23 and Luke 20:2.

The saying goes, "no person is born a master of their craft". Even for exceptional talents the road to success often consists of very hard work, and we want to see in people we admire how they achieved their success. We seek explanations for Jesus' power as we examine the stories of modern celebrities for their key to success. And sometimes such explanations can be quite mis-constructed as in an illustration by Bill Russel in his autobiography *Second Wind / The Memoirs of an Opinionated Man*². There he gives an account of his long journey toward becoming a celebrity basketball player, and he also reflects on the reasons for his success and an infuriating cover story by *Sports Illustrated* in 1971 to the issue of why blacks had come to dominate certain sports, among them basketball.

After reviewing the various "scientific studies" on racial characteristics, it concluded that blacks were doing well in sports because they were "natural athletes" ...To support this they said: "...Blacks have a marked superiority in hyperextensibility, or capacity for double-jointedness and general looseness of joints" - but *Sports Illustrated* didn't mention ... all the factors that turned my ambitions to basketball

² Bill Russel and Taylor Branch, *Second Wind / The Memoirs of an Opinionated Man* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979)

instead of, say, banking, ... and of course nothing like the "white banker" article could ever appear in *The Wall Street Journal* in which the only reasons given had to do with their physical inheritance. ... I worked at basketball up to eight hours a day for twenty years - straining, learning, sweating, studying.³

This is a remarkable example of misrepresentation of a star, possible only because of the racial prejudice of the time. But what does it have to do with Jesus?

Most Christians would affirm that Jesus cannot be compared with any other star, celebrity or other human person because he was the Son of God. He was the word that "became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (John 1:14). The ONLY son, that is, for even though we all are children of God, Jesus the Christ alone was perfect, the one "without blemish" (Hebrews 9:14) and God himself. And that, they say, is from where Jesus received his *exousia* ("authority", as in Mark 11:28; also, "right", "liberty", "ability", "capability", "supernatural power", "ruling power"), from his divinity.

And then there are those who affirm the other side

³ cf. *ibid.*, 197-199.

of the Christological debate of millenia: that Jesus was a human person as we are. And some go as far as saying that while Jesus was "true God of true God", as we say with the Nicene Creed, he was also true human of true human parents; much more of both than we are, but equal to us in being both divine and human. So the viewpoint in the Science of Mind:

We accept Jesus' example and teachings. We do not deny the divinity of Jesus, but rather we affirm the divinity of all people, because God is the Father of us all. We think of Jesus as an example, not an exception.⁴

In this vein Peggy Basset can say in her sermon:

what was it that Jesus had, that we don't have? - Nothing! He said that what he did we could do. And if we can do what he did, if you look very closely what it was, he declared the presence of God right where he was. He lived as if the presence of God was who he was. And out of that he was illumined and he healed all of those people that came into his light, that wanted to be healed. And that's exactly what each of us could do.⁵

⁴ *The Viewpoint in the Science of Mind Concerning Certain Traditional Beliefs* (A pamphlet published by Science of Mind Publications, Los Angeles, undated)

⁵ page 144f.

How is it, that we are empowered by Jesus Christ?
 How were his first followers inspired and enabled by him,
 and what does all that mean for our attempts at ministry?

In this chapter I want to give room for a pericope
 of the New Testament, our founding document, to speak to
 us about empowerment.

There are a number of words for "power" in the
 Bible. The most important two words for "power" in the New
 Testament are δύναμις ("power", "ability", "strength") and
 ἐξουσία ("authority", "right", "liberty", "ability", "ca-
 pability", "supernatural power", "ruling power").

So in Matthew 9:6, parallel Mark 2:10 and Luke
 5:24, "The Son of man has authority (ἐξουσία) on earth to
 forgive sins". In Matthew 24:29f., (Jesus' speech about
 the end) and its parallel Mark 13:25f. / Luke 21:26f.
 Jesus says "the powers (δυνάμεις) of the heavens will be
 shaken ... and they will see the Son of Man coming on the
 clouds with power (δύναμις) and great glory."

In Matthew 28:18 Jesus says, "All authority
 (ἐξουσία) in heaven and on earth has been given to me",
 consequently giving his commission to his disciples to
 make disciples of all nations and baptize them.

In Luke, chapter 1:35 Jesus' birth is announced to

Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power (δύναμις) of the Most High will overshadow you". In chapter 4:14 Jesus returns to Galilee after his temptation by the devil "in the power (δύναμις) of the Holy Spirit", and then commanded the unclean spirits "with authority and power" (ἐξουσία and δύναμις; verse 36).

In the first chapter of Acts, verse 8, the Risen tells the disciples in Jerusalem "you shall receive power (δύναμις) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you". In chapter 3, verse 12, after Peter healed a lame man, he addressed the people, "...Why do you stare at us as though by our own power (δύναμις) or piety we had made him walk?" and later was questioned by the rulers, elders and scribes (4:7), "By what power (δύναμις) or by what name did you do this?"

Stephen was "full of power" (δύναμις; Acts 6:8), and Peter says that "God anointed ("christ"-ened) Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power" (δύναμις; Acts 10:38).

Paul talks about power frequently. To the Romans he writes his famous statement (Romans 1:16): "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power (δύναμις) of God for salvation to everyone who has faith" and (Romans 8:38f):

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers (δυνάμεις), nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

To the Corinthians he writes (1 Corinthians 2:4f.):

My speech and message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power (δύναμις), that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power (δύναμις) of God,

and the statement quoted at the beginning of this study (1 Corinthians 4:20):

The Kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power (δύναμις).

So are the reflections of the New Testament writers. Whatever Jesus' thoughts on power were is much more difficult to assess. Few mentionings are preserved that even use either δύναμις or ἐξουσία and can be believed to be authentic words of Jesus. An example may be in Jesus' reply to the question of the Sadducees about marriage in the resurrection: "You know neither the scriptures nor the power (δύναμις) of God" (Matthew 22:29 parallel Mark 12:24). Luke gives a different formulation of Jesus' answer without the reference to the power of God. From this

quote, as from others, it appears that Jesus did not use the words δύνάμις or ἐξουσία in a way notably different from the Jews of his time.

Very well documented, however, is the reaction of the people around him, the chief priests, scribes and elders, and the masses to Jesus' power. Matthew, Mark and Luke agree that Jesus' audience saw his ἐξουσία:

And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority (ἐξουσία), [and not as the scribes] (Matthew 7:29, parallel Mark 1:22 and Luke 4:32),

just as they agree on the chief priests', scribes' and elders' questioning of Jesus' ἐξουσία in the already quoted verse:

By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you the authority to do them? (Mark 11:28, parallel Matthew 21:23 and Luke 20:2)

Because of the certainty of Jesus' power the Gerd Theissen's study *Soziologie der Jesusbewegung* ("Sociology of the Jesus Movement") can state:

There can be no doubt that Jesus had paranormal powers. And on top of that: that he had the ability to awaken these powers in other people.*

* Gerd Theissen, *Soziologie der Jesusbewegung* (Muenchen:

Where in the New Testament can we best learn about Jesus' power and his disciples' empowerment?

One might want to study Paul or some other writer, but in many ways the most authentic reports about the origins of the Jesus movement are found in the oldest Gospel, the Gospel of Mark. That is the Gospel I want to turn to, and more specifically, I want to give a reading of the ending of that Gospel, the Empty Tomb Story.

Mark devotes a large portion of his gospel to Jesus' end, and the conclusion is very peculiar. The last sentence of the Empty Tomb Story, "And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" has already very early (second or third century A. D.⁷) been appended with the traditional, familiar ending. It is a very curious pericope indeed, especially given the importance we give to Jesus' resurrection for the Christian faith, following Paul's statement (1 Corinthians 15:14),

Kaiser, 1977) 104; translation mine.

⁷ cf. Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the New Testament* (London: United Bible Societies, 1971) 125.

If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.

Mark's Empty Tomb Story is also very peculiar because of a new light brought to it by women theologians who recognize it as one of the earliest sources that show the misrepresentation of women in the writings of the New Testament men authors, and the cultural- and male-biased distortion of Jesus empowerment of people and women in particular.

But let the story have room to speak to us for itself.

THE TEXT OF MARK 16: 1-8

1. Καὶ διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ καὶ Μαρία ἡ τοῦ Ἰακώβου καὶ Σαλώμῃ ἡγόρασαν ἀρώματα ἵνα ἐλθοῦσαι ἀλείψωσιν αὐτόν.

And, Shabbat having passed, Maria the Magdalene and Maria the one of Iakobos and Salome bought spices so that they might go and anoint him.

2. καὶ λίαν πρῶτὴ τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων ἔρχονται ἐπὶ τὸ μνημεῖον ἀνατείλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου.

And very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb while the sun was rising.

3. καὶ ἔλεγον πρὸς ἑαυτάς· τίς ἀποκυλίσει ἡμῖν τὸν λίθον ἐκ τῆς θύρας τοῦ μνημείου;

And they said to themselves: Who will roll away for us the stone from the door of the tomb?

4. καὶ ἀναβλέψασαί θεωροῦσιν ὅτι ἀποκεκύλισται ὁ λίθος· ἦν γὰρ μέγας σφόδρα.

And looking up they saw that the stone had been rolled away, for it was very large.

5. Καὶ εἰσελθοῦσαι εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον εἶδον νεανίσκον καθήμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς περιβεβλημένον στολὴν λευκὴν, καὶ ἐξεθαμβήτηνσαν.

And entering the tomb they saw a young man sitting on the right dressed in a white robe, and they were amazed.

6. ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐταῖς· μὴ ἐκθαμβεῖσθε· Ἰησοῦν ζητεῖτε τὸν Ναζαρηνὸν τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον· ἠγέρθη, οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε· ἴδε ὁ τόπος ὅπου ἔθηκαν αὐτόν.

He said to them: do not be amazed. Jesus you seek, the Nazarene, the crucified. He has risen, he is not here. See the place where they laid him.

7. ἀλλὰ ὑπάγετε εἰπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ ὅτι προάγει ὑμεῖς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν· ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν.

But go tell his disciples and Peter that he goes before you to Galilaia; there you will see him as he told you.

8. Καὶ ἐξελθοῦσαι ἐφυγον ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου, εἶχεν γὰρ αὐτὰς τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις·

καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν· ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ.

And having gone out they fled from the tomb, for trembling and ecstasy had hold of them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

This is the text of Mark 16:1-8 in the best literary form we can reconstruct.⁹ The variants of the text are seemingly small and negligible for our purposes. The question with which we approach this text is: How can this story be a story of empowerment? Does an exegesis of these eight verses support such a reading? But first, we need to listen more to what the text says.

What is this short text about? Is there a movement and a direction? What is the subject of discussion? A list of the main clauses, their verbs and subjects can help to clarify that:

VS.	SUBJECT	VERB	(GREEK)
1.	Maria & Maria & Salome	bought	(ἡγόρασαν)
2.	(they)	went	(ἔρχονται)
3.	(they)	said	(ἔλεγον)
4.	(they)	looked	(θεωροῦσιν)
5.	(they)	saw and were amazed	(εἶδον καὶ ἐξεθαμβήθησαν)
6.a	(the young man)	said	(λέγει)
b	(the young man)	do not be amazed!	(μὴ ἐκθ.)
c	(the young man)	you seek	(ζητεῖτε)
d	(Jesus)	has risen	(ἡγέρθη)
		is not here	(οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε)
e	(the young man)	see!	(Ἴδε)
7.a	(the young man)	go tell!	(ὁπάγετε εἰπατε)
b	(the young man)	you will see	(ὄψεσθε)
8.a	(they)	fled	(ἔφυγον)
b	(they)	said	(εἶπαν)
c	(they)	were afraid	(ἐφοβοῦντο)

This grammatical chart reveals an amazingly clear symmetry and movement in this pericope which seems quite dis-herent in normal reading. There is an almost exactly equal number of verbs (seven and eight) before and after the statement about Jesus. The subject moves from the three women to the young man (νεανίσκος) to Jesus to the young man and back to the women. Thus, grammatically the pericope has a perfectly logical and aesthetic structure. This structure suggests that the story is about a journey of three women who go, see, hear the message: *He (Jesus) has risen, he is not here*, then flee and are afraid.

Apart from this grammatical structure there is little more about the pericope that makes sense easily or in an obvious way.

If one looks at the content of the verbs that seem so neatly arranged above, one is left a little 'amazed'. The three women start by buying, but this theme never returns or is picked up in this very short story. No neces-

^e The Greek text is from *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1979)

sity for this feature of the story may seem detectable. The women might just as well have set out to the tomb in order to anoint the body. What point is there in mentioning the time factor in quadruple carefulness? - "Shabbat having passed", "very early in the morning", "on the first day of the week", at sunrise. Are these important symbols from the larger context with a special role here? Are the spices important? What is the reason for mentioning the stone? Do all of these compile symbolic meanings for the trembling and being-out-of-themselves at the end? Are all of these fear evoking elements? Or what else is the factor in the story that holds them together since the flow of the narrative does not give a satisfactory explanation? And the sermon-like speech of the mysterious young man seems no less loaded with symbols.

To understand this pericope we need to look at its important elements and symbols.

IMPORTANT ELEMENTS AND SYMBOLS

SHABBAT HAVING PASSED

This is the last of Mark's references to the chronology of the events in his Gospel. He started his narration of the Passion in 14:1, two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Mazzot). Thus it was the twelfth day after the appearance of the spring new moon, Nisan.

14:12 put the eating of the lamb (the Supper) on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, that is the fourteenth day of Nisan when the lamb had to be sacrificed (cf. Luke 22:7). After they had sung a hymn (14:26) Jesus went with his disciples to the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane to be arrested that same night.

As soon as it was morning he was taken before the Sanhedrin where the chief priests and the elders and scribes and the whole council sought testimony against him to put him to death (14:55) and delivered him to Pilate (15:1). He was crucified on the same day. The next chronological reference is 15:42, still the same day in the evening; Mark restates that it is the day before Shabbat when Joseph of Arimathea asks Pilate for the body of the cruci-

fied Jesus.

Thus, after the day of Jesus' crucifixion, one day, Shabbat, has passed and on the following day the three women went to the tomb. In other words, when Shabbat had passed it was Saturday after 6 p.m. and the bazaars were open again and the women bought spices in order that without any further delay they might go to the tomb very early the next morning to anoint Jesus' body⁹.

Thus we note three things in particular about the phrase "Shabbat having passed":

1. Time was a pressing factor. Four different references to timing are given in the beginning two verses of our pericope and Shabbat is one of the many time factors that had to be taken into consideration. The whole plot of arrest, trial before three different authorities and before the crowd and the crucifixion, had been acted out within a single day in order to observe the regulations of

⁹ cf. William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975) 678;

A detailed discussion of the day of Jesus' death with special recognition of its relationship to the Halakha is found in Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Das Evangelium nach Markus, Lukas und Johannes und die Apostelgeschichte* (Muenchen: Beck, 1969) 812-853.

Shabbat as well as of Passover and Mazzot, and even after Jesus' death timing remains to be an important factor.

2. Our pericope picks up on the narrative right after the two Marias had seen where Jesus' corpse had been laid. It was not any amount of time that had passed, but only the holy Shabbat, the time not for activity but for rest and religious observance. No time was lost after that to go back to where the corpse had been laid to complete the work.

3. With the passing of Shabbat, everything that it stands for may have passed in some implied way also. Shabbat is the seventh and last day of the week, the day on which Yahwe completed his creation of the world. The Shabbat Commandment is the heart of the Law.

The weekly Sabbath is for Judaism a sign of divine election, for no people apart from Israel has sanctified God in keeping the Sabbath. The day of the rest which the patriarchs celebrated grants a foretaste already of eternal glory, which will be an unending Sabbath. The wonderful power of the Sabbath is so great that on the seventh day even the ungodly in Gehenna may rest from their torment. For this reason the Sabbath commandment is as urgent as all the other commandments of the Torah put together. If Israel would only keep two Sabbaths as ordained, redemption would come. The Sabbath commandment is thus the heart of the Law.¹⁰

¹⁰ Eduard Lohse, "The Sabbath in Judaism" *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971) VII, 8.

All of these meanings may be connoted and in some way present when Mark opens his conclusion to the "Gospel of Jesus Christ" (Mk 1:1) with the words "Shabbat having passed" - along with Jesus himself.

MARY MAGDALENE, MARY THE MOTHER OF JAMES, AND SALOME.

Our perspective on the mentionings of women in the Bible has been greatly altered since the rise of feminist theology. We have entered a new awareness about the issues involved and have become critical of the dominant commentaries. A new literature has evolved on the subject which is written by women who are quite outspoken against patriarchal distortions of women's traditions, "phallic morality" (Mary Daly) and "androcentricism" (Hanna Wolff) in many forms.

Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel in her book *The Women Around Jesus*¹¹ gives a brief introduction to our pericope

¹¹ Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *The Women Around Jesus* (New York: Crossroad, 1982) 1f.

from her experience as a woman theologian:

One Sunday (some years ago in Solentiname in Nicaragua), part of the Easter story was read aloud, about how the women came to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus. The peasant women got excited and began to identify themselves with these women: 'It was the women who went to the tomb first, and not the men; women are braver than men'. 'Women have more heart. And love can make you very strong. When you love, you have no fear and can cope with anyone. Jesus, who died for love, gave them this courage, the courage of love. When you love, you're bold. You're not even afraid of death.'

What happened next seems to me to be typical of Christian communities right down the ages: the men protested that the women were laying claim to a special role: 'I don't see that the women were all that brave ... what was so tremendous about going there and weeping for a while? ...'

The spontaneous reaction of the women was repressed, and Cardenal the theologian provided the historical reason for this: in fact it was not so dangerous for women to be at the tomb as it was for men.

Moltmann-Wendel's paragraph on history may represent the sentiment of many women about the issue:

History tends to be understood as "his story", the story of males, and Christian history also tends to be regarded from this perspective, though it once began as the history of men and women. Men make history. Paul and Peter shaped the churches, and the Bible hands down to us what they thought about God and about liberation through Jesus. In this history of masculine activity, women get a very raw deal. For the most part they appear in the weaker social roles; they serve as widows, appear as sisters and wives. Males make remarks about them, about their refusal to wear veils, say that they ought to obey the rules rather than join in making them, that they should not be arrogant and presumptuous.¹²

This last statement certainly holds true for a brief look at Mark's gospel. Where Mark mentions women he does not paint a favorable image of them at all. All of them are either ill like Simon's mother-in-law or the woman in chapter 5 with the hemorrhage and Jairus' daughter, or malicious like Herodias' wife and daughter asking for John's head, or righteous but of little respected status like the widow offering a penny in chapter 12.

Another problem is that the greatest part of the testimony of women disappeared. Pieces of evidence are now analyzed to reconstruct a more historical view of women in Jesus' life and in the early church. Moltmann-Wendel continues:

It is now generally agreed that much material about or written by women was lost or destroyed. ... There is some evidence that women, and not the disciples, were the real followers of Jesus. ... The Bible has within its pages a unique history of the greatness, the sovereignty, the wisdom and the courage of women. It is perhaps the most interesting book in connection with the emancipation of women.

The women of Solentiname knew this.¹³

¹² *ibid.*, 4.

¹³ *ibid.*, 5f.

More specifically about our text she says:

In the Gospel of Mark there is a story about women which puts the story of the disciples in the shade. Outwardly, it all seems like a man's story, and the women's story is hidden. ...The story of the women takes a subversive course, underground. ...Mark's perspective, which has hitherto been concealed and which is not usually noticed at all: where the disciples fail, the women are the true disciples. ...Jesus did not just have women as disciples; for some circles in the early church they were the *real* disciples.¹⁴

And she quotes a few other leading feminist theologians:

None of the disciples saw how Jesus died.

To our surprise Mark lifts the curtain on a quite unknown part of the life of Jesus, the Unknown, in which the feminine rather than the masculine prevails. The purely masculine gospel extends as far as Golgotha, and after that we have the feminine one. ...

All the disciples had fled, had "denied" him; only the women were stronger than the men: the faith of Peter the rock ran away like sand; the faith of Mary, however, was truly a rock. The love of men proved powerless; the love of women was strong. The sun of man's love set in death, but the sun of woman's love arises in the resurrection. (Mereschowski)¹⁵

In Mark's theological perspective women are the functional successors of Jesus and they represent the

¹⁴ ibid., 109ff.

¹⁵ ibid., 108.

true intention of Jesus and his mission within the messianic people of God. (Elisabeth Schuessler-Fiorenza)¹⁶

And she points out the downgrading of the women's witness at Jesus' death, burial and at the empty tomb:

The Gospel of Mark, the oldest source we have, still tells us clearly that all the disciples of Jesus fled and that women were present at the execution (15:40f.). In parallel to this, Matthew describes the flight of the disciples and similarly mentions three times, the group of women at Jesus' execution, burial and resurrection. Only individual names vary.

Only in Luke do we find the church's view, which is still common even today: the flight of the disciples is not mentioned. Alongside the women under the cross there are also many acquaintances, who are even named for the first time, and perhaps in this way Luke is indicating the preponderance of men. The special role of women, still known to the early tradition, is concentrated on their presence at the tomb and on Easter morning. Luke, who also restricted the role of the women in other cases, created the picture of a church where parity prevailed.¹⁷

Even the great teachers of religion, the painters of the pre-Reformation period, who have shaped all of us, preferred to harmonize rather than provoke. Thus they portray patrons, bishops and protectors under the cross, or at least the beloved disciple, told of by the later, stylized, Gospel of John. Obviously there were also always women there. However, hardly any artists painted the story of Jesus correctly from a historical point of view, and they were rarely in-

¹⁶ ibid., 108.

¹⁷ ibid., 112f.

interested in rescuing female honour. Thus the pictures suggest to us that there is no differentiation between men and women. Here women's experiences have been forgotten. It is hard for values to be communicated where there are no rights.

Hardly anyone is aware that "we" always think, theologize, paint and pray from the perspective of the disciples. A passion prayer, "Lord Jesus, your people have rejected you, all your friends have forsaken you ..." displays this impregnable masculine bastion about which people hardly ever reflect.¹⁰

These quotes reflect only a small facet of the current discussion about women in the Bible. One thing has become clear: the fact, that in Mark 16 it is women who first discover the empty tomb, sets that story distinctly apart from the rest of the Gospel. This distinction alerts us to the question of true discipleship as a controversial issue between the disciples and the group of women followers and to the true witness to Jesus' death and resurrection in a society where women's witnesses were not taken to be valid.

¹⁰ ibid., 116f.

MARY OF MAGDALA

She is the first in the list of the three women in Mark 16, and she is not just any woman but held a very prominent place in Jesus' life and in the early church. Moltmann-Wendel writes:

All four Gospels always mention her name in first place when they speak of the group of women. So we can assume that she played a leading role and had an integrating effect.

We can easily understand how much conflict there must have been among the women who had given up their family ties, between the group of men and the group of women, and not least with the world around, which must have found such a woman provocative.

Mary Magdalene had the qualities of a leader, and according to Luke (8:3) she contributed wealth. Like Joanna, she helped to bring an urban element to the middle-class Jesus movement. The Jewish women - for the first time without the protection of the wider family - were submissive to her. She was eloquent and persuasive. She could speak, and did not find it difficult to exert her authority. In the later Gospels we can detect this mature sovereignty which always foxed the disciples, especially Peter.¹⁹

All of this sheds light on an adequate understanding of Mark 16. Mary Magdalene, cured by Jesus of severe mental illness (seven-fold demonic possessions, cf. Mk

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 69f.

16:9) and one of his most faithful followers, a woman leader, preacher, visionary, and "feminine confidential partner of Jesus"²⁰ is a very powerful witness to what is at stake in that chapter.

SALOME

From Mark's and Matthew's parallel mentioning of two women under the cross some people infer that the wife of Zebedee and Salome are one and the same person. If so, she was a woman who according to Matthew left her husband and her occupation to follow Jesus, the wandering preacher.²¹

THREE

Three women went to the tomb. This may be important in light of the fact that there were also three

²⁰ ibid. 90.

²¹ cf. ibid., 124f., and W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) 741.

persons with Jesus at his transfiguration. On the third day they discovered the empty tomb and the charge before the Sanhedrin was that Jesus had said he would destroy the temple and build another within three days (Mark 14:58). There were three announcements of Jesus' suffering (Mark 8:31-33; 9:30-32; 10:32-34), three times Peter denied Jesus, three persons were crucified, and more could be found.

THEY WENT AND BOUGHT SPICES TO ANOINT HIM.

Funeral rites were very important in Judaism.

It is quite difficult to find commentaries or source material on the subject which may be partly due to the fact that no records were kept of things so common in practice. Some scholars have even concluded that "the Israelites did not embalm the dead"²². At the same time this lack of evidence supports Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel's affirmation that the burial cult was passed on by the women and along with much of women's traditions was repressed in the an-

²² e. g., Delbert Roy Hillers, "Burial in the Bible" in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (New York: Macmillan, 1971) IV, col. 1516.

drocentric literature.²³

Of the few references there are about burial rites, one is in Josephus from which the importance of funeral rites to the Jews becomes clear by comparing it with the impiety of the Idumaeans:²⁴

They [the Idumaeans] actually went so far in their impiety as to cast out the corpses without burial, although the Jews are so careful about funeral rites that even malefactors who have been sentenced to crucifixion are taken down and buried before sunset"

The importance of anointing the body is hardly documented at all. There is a reference in the Mishna which says²⁵:

One may do anything on Shabbat which is necessary on a deceased; one anoints him and washes him, only one should not move a limb.

From this quote it seems clear that anointing the corpse was a custom important enough to override even the rest of Shabbat

²³ Moltmann-Wendel.

²⁴ Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Book IV,5,2; 317.

²⁵ Mishna, Shabbat XXIII 5, quoted in Josef Blinzler, *Der Prozess Jesu* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1969) 398, Anmerkung 52; translation mine.

Apart from the anointing and wrapping in linens of the corpse, the most stressed feature of burial rites is that the burial be communal:

Most typically in a natural cave or a chamber cut into soft rock ... used by generations of the same family. ... This practice, though not universal if only because not all could afford it was common enough to give rise to the Hebrew expressions 'to sleep with one's fathers' and 'to be gathered to one's kin' as synonyms for 'to die'²⁶.

The intent to anoint Jesus' body may have been another part of trying to give him a proper burial and relieve his shameful end:

The end of life is not yet the end of punishment in ancient times. Roman law knew a concomitant punishment to accompany execution: the loss of the honors of the dead. Thus it was not permissible to bury the corpse after a magisterial execution, whereby the kind of crime or form of execution seemed to make no difference. One of the most embarrassing examples of this barbarian order is given in the story of the unfortunate Christians who were decapitated in the amphitheater of Lyon in 177 A.D. For six days the mutilated and dismembered corpses of the martyrs lay in the open air, continuously guarded. ... No other was the usual fate of the mortal remnants of others who were crucified.²⁷

²⁶ Hillers, IV, col. 1516.

²⁷ Blinzler, 385; translation mine.

The fact that there is almost no evidence of the practice of anointing the dead may once again reflect a patriarchal andro-centric rendering, if we follow Moltmann-Wendel:²⁸

In the middle-class Western world anointing has always been connected with cosmetics, with the care of the sick and with loving actions, and has been commended to women as their very own sphere. Fliedner saw the women who went to anoint Jesus as models for his nursing sisters. Like going to the cemetery or lamenting the dead, anointing by 'the tender hands of women', in Shalom Ben Chorim's phrase, is now regarded in our culture as a specifically feminine role. The flask of oil has become the symbol of almost all female saints.

Furthermore, Mary of Bethany, Mary Magdalene and the woman who was a great sinner have been rolled into one, sin and anointing have been connected together, and anointing has been understood as a woman's way of making good.

But who would anoint in ancient times?

A host would anoint his guests to refresh them. Dead bodies were anointed to preserve them, and as a mark of reverence. Sick people were anointed as a cure. Mark records that the disciples did this. And kings were anointed. Anointing was not a task restricted to women. For example, no woman ever anointed an Israelite king!"

These may be important to keep in mind when we try to speculate, what the meaning is of the women setting out to anoint Jesus' body and of the fact, that Jesus' body

²⁸ ibid., 96f.

was not anointed because the women were too late, also keeping in mind that Jesus' messiahship (= "Christship") is a central theme in Mark's Gospel.²⁹ When Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do you say that I am?", Peter answered him οὐ εἶ ὁ χριστός ("you are the anointed" which is the same as "you are the Christ", or "you are the Messiah"; Mark 8:29).

WHILE THE SUN WAS RISING

The women took the earliest opportunity to go to anoint Jesus' body. They had to wait until after Shabbat to buy the spices, and then until sunrise to go do their work.

²⁹ cf. Wilhelm Wrede, *Das Messiasgeheimnis in den Evangelien* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1963);

G. H. Boobyer, "The Secrecy Motif in St. Mark's Gospel," *New Testament Studies* 6:3 (April 1960) 225-235;

Eugene J. Conover, "Mark's Messianic Secret and its Implications for the Church's Ministry" (Unpublished Rel. D. Dissertation, School of Theology at Claremont, 1966)

THE STONE

According to J. Jeremias³⁰, stone was regarded the most enduring writing material, hence the stone tables of the Mosaic Law. The stone is an image of what is dead and of what cannot be enjoyed, so that it is often brought into contrast with God. In Mark 12:10 Christ is compared to a rock which may be randomly related to the holy rock which dispenses the water of life, an idea firmly associated with the Feast of Tabernacles, mentioned in Mark's passion narrative.

Christ as the rock of the head of the corner applies a metaphor to himself which is grounded in several Old Testament statements about the Messiah. He is the foundation stone as well as the key stone, the stone which crushes and the stone of offense.

All of these may be present in the background when in Mark 16 a very large stone is expected to be firmly in place as the key to the entrance, the corner stone of the women's worry, yet has moved.

³⁰ Joachim Jeremias "Alôo," in: Kittel and Friedrich IV, 268ff.

AND THEY LOOKED UP

It is noteworthy that the other five occurrences of the verb ἀναβλέπω (to look up) are in the immediate context of miracles. In Mark 6:41 Jesus looked up to heaven when he prayed over the fish and the bread which were multiplied. In Mark 7:34 Jesus heals a deaf, in 8:24 he heals a blind man as also in 10:51f. Thus the use of the verb ἀναβλέπω in our pericope might lead the reader to expect a miracle, perhaps with some healing or edifying quality.

A WHITE ROBE

The word λευκός (white) appears in only one other place in Mark: at the transfiguration. Much more so than just the particular word it is the similarity of the scenes and their mysticism that connects them for the reader. More will need to be said about this.

THEY WERE AMAZED

The verb ἐκθαμβέομαι (to be amazed) appears four times in Mark. Once it marks the reaction of the crowd to

Jesus, Peter, James and John after the transfiguration; the second time in Gethsemane where Jesus began to be *greatly troubled and distressed* (ἤρξατο ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδεμονεῖν; Mark 14:33), where the second verb is a single occurrence in Mark. The other two places where ἐκθαμβέομαι occurs are in our text.

These four occurrences are the only four in the New Testament. The rarity of this word confirms the distinct character of the passage about the young man in the white robe in verses 5-7 of our text. They stand out as out of the ordinary, mystical and apocalyptic.

JESUS YOU SEEK, THE NAZARENE, THE CRUCIFIED

The adjective Ναζαρηνός (Nazarene) is favored by Mark and may indicate his redaction in this passage.

In this section we examined more closely the important elements and symbols that are part of our text, so as to gain a better understanding of what Mark is talking about. Now we need to look more closely at the way he put them together into a story in order to understand what point he wants to make in it. Let us turn to our text's form and structure.

FORM AND STRUCTURE

The pericope Mark 16, 1-8 is not of one even flow. We have already noted that verses 6 and 7 are different in vocabulary, style and content. Also, the last statement, verse 8b will need a separate look.

There are three sub-units to our text which make up the structure:

The Sub-Units

1. The Main Body of the story, verses 1-5, 8a
2. The Insertion, verses 6, 7
3. The Final Clause, verse 8b

1. THE MAIN BODY (Verses 1-5, 8a)

This body of text is a quite consistent narrative.³¹ Verse 1 is the introduction to the story, naming

³¹ Some scholars want to include the previous verse (Mark 15:47; it reads: "Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid.") as the beginning of the pericope. However, this would

the main characters and their intent, i.e. the anointing of Jesus' body. Verse 2 continues with their action to implement their plan at the first opportunity. Verse 3 continues with the internal dialogue of the three-person subject about the difficulties they expect in carrying out their plan. Verse 4 gives the first half of the crisis, in that the anticipated difficulty turns out not to be one, much to their surprise, as is implied in the explanation $\eta\gamma\gamma\alpha\rho\ \mu\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\alpha\varsigma\ \sigma\phi\acute{o}\delta\omicron\rho\alpha$ (for it was very large). Verse 5 gives the second half of the crisis, describing the difficulty or strange phenomenon which is encountered instead of the expected. Verse 8 gives the dénouement of the story, the solution on which the women decide in face of the crisis, and their reason in doing so, which is at the same time their conclusion: fleeing, fear and tremor.

This body of text (vss. 1-5, 8a) is a consistent story, a report about the experience of three women who

create a doublet of the main characters when 16:1 is clearly the introduction to the story, giving the intent of the subjects, namely the anointing of Jesus' body.

Interesting is Eugene LaVerdiere's rendering. He reconstructs from our text two stories, a miracle story, including verses 15:46; 16:3, 4, 8b, and an anti-burial cult story, including verses 15:47; 16:2, 5, 6 (in an unpublished source, quoted by Burton Mack in a seminar in 1983 at the School of Theology at Claremont)

went out to anoint Jesus' body and fled from a frightening encounter. It is complete and functional, it has structure, movement, a point, everything a story needs.

2. THE INSERTION (Verses 6, 7)

Verses 6 and 7 are different in vocabulary, style, and genre. They start and end in imperatives and form a speech rather than a report. They are reminiscent of epiphany stories and of proclamatory preaching, quite in contrast to the rest of the pericope, with a complete structure of their own:

I. The Encounter

1. Setting the Stage:

The women, having entered the tomb see a young man dressed in a white robe;

2. The Fear of the Visionaries

In symmetry to the unusual appearance of what is envisioned, there is unusual fear on the side of the visionaries: ἐξεθαμβήτησαν;

II. The Message

1. Opening Formula

He said to them: Do not be amazed. This prepares the visionaries for the message;

2. Identification

*You seek Jesus the crucified, the Nazarene.*³²

³² This is unusual. In other places where Mark speaks about the appearance of an apocalyptic reality, there is some divinity in the language, e.g., at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration or with the

3. Facing the situation

He is risen, he is not here, see the place where they laid him. The visionaries are given the proof of sense-perception of the situation which is the reality in which the call will have to be heard;

4. Call and Assurance

Go tell ... you will see. The last words "as he told you" function as a seal to what has been said. They authorize and authenticate it as standing in continuity with the past and the future.

This little story might be worth being compared with other epiphany stories. One might find an important alteration of the general pattern on the issue of presence-absence. Alluding to epiphanies are doubtless the white robe, which was also mentioned in Mark 9:3, Jesus' transfiguration, the young man³³, and the verb ἐκτεταγμένον³⁴, fear being omnipresent in epiphanies³⁵.

obsessed at Gerasa. Here the young man does not identify himself but gives a statement about Jesus' absence instead. Some scholars have suggested that the young man was Mark (cf. J. H. McIndoe, "The Young Man at the Tomb," *Expository Times* 80:4 [1969] 125). I am not fond of that interpretation. It is strange, however, that the young man is the subject of speech; it is not a voice from the heavens and there is no claim to authority on the side of the speaker except the reference in verse 7: *as he told you*.

³³ cf. e.g., 2 Maccabees 3:26,33.

³⁴ cf. page 77f.

³⁵ cf., e.g., Isaiah 6:5, and many other places.

The part about Jesus in verse 6 seems close to the genre of kerygmatic preaching. It is reminiscent of 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 in the centrality of the risen Christ (Anointed One), the Crucified. The word τόπος (place) may carry a multiplicity of connotations and memories of places where Jesus had been. The young man sitting on the right might allude to Mark 10:37 where James and John ask Jesus, "Grant us to sit one at your right and one at your left".

The call *go and tell* may allude to Mark 6:7ff. ("He began to send them out two by two") and early Christian missionary language. The address to *the disciples and Peter*, in the opinion of some scholars, means the inclusive body of disciples and may reflect a tradition from which Mark drew.

That he goes before you to Galilaia is certainly a symbol of a larger theology of places. Galilaia in Mark is a place where events of theological and eschatological importance happen, and Mark draws distinctions, dividing reality into spatio-physical sections.

There you will see him. This sentence is connected with the issue of seeing and believing. Perception with the eye may not have played a role quite as exaggerated as in modern scientific orientation, but there is no reason

to believe that people were less prone to its problems in ancient times.³⁶

There is a very particular tension in our text between apocalyptic "super-naturality" and the sobering down-to-earth reality of things like stones, young men, robes and colors, empty places. It is almost as if the last three words have to restore the continuity of reality in experience: the visionaries need to be reminded that they have heard of this before and will see it again, in order to believe it and be able to absorb it.

3. THE FINAL CLAUSE (Verse 8b)

At the beginning of this section I separated verse 8b from the main body of the narrative. This is because the repetition of the fear motive is a doublet to verse 8a; also verse 8b~~x~~ ("and they said nothing to anyone") does not make much sense as part of the narrative if ver-

³⁶ cf. Thomas in John 20:24ff.

ses 6+7 are taken out; with verses 6+7, verse 8b still leaves the reader unsatisfied because one starts wondering about how the silence was eventually broken and how the tension was released.

Another, less formal and more important reason for separating verse 8b from the rest of the text is that it is only understood adequately if it embraces much more than just a reason for the silence of the women. We will say more about that in the next section.

THE STRUCTURE OF MARK 16:1-8

	VERSE
A. TOWARDS THE CONFRONTATION WITH THE HOLY	
1. Preparation the women buy spices; we hear about their intention;	1
2. External Movement They go to the tomb on the first day of the week as the sun rises	2
3. Internal Movement We hear about their worries	3
4. Announcement of the Confrontation The miracle of the removed stone announces the impending experience of amazement	4
B. THE CONFRONTATION WITH THE HOLY	
1. Its Appearance	
a) In Sight: Inside the tomb a young man in a white robe sitting on the right side	5a
b) In Emotion: They were <i>out-of-themselves</i>	5b
c) In Hearing: He knows them, he links them and himself to Jesus as the Nazarene, the crucified	6a,b
2. Its Center: He has risen, he is not here	6c
3. Its Calling	
a) For the Moment: face and believe the empty reality	6d
b) For the Future: <i>missio</i> and <i>pro-missio</i> : go, tell - and you will see	
c) The Seal: <i>as he has told you</i>	7
C. AFTER THE CONFRONTATION WITH THE HOLY	
1. Preparation: They leave the tomb	8aα
2. External Movement: They flee from the tomb	8aβ
3. Internal Movement: Ecstasy had hold of them	8aγ
4. Non-Announcement of the Confrontation: They said nothing to anyone	8bα
D. THE BOTTOM LINE: For they were afraid	8bβ

WHERE IS THE POWER?

You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?

*Pilate to Jesus*³⁷

So what is the point the text makes? Where is the reference to power and empowerment? We will need to look some more at its context in Mark's gospel as a whole and its social setting.

What has become clear is that, of all the things that are important in the story, the most weight rests on the Center statement, verse 6c, "He has risen", and on the Bottom Line, verse 8bβ, "For they were afraid". What does that mean?

In the structure analysis of Mark 16:1-8 the final clause, "For they were afraid" (verse 8bβ), was separated from the body of text for a number of formal reasons. The more important reason for separating that clause from the rest of the text is that it is only understood adequately if it embraces much more than just a reason for the si-

³⁷ John 19:10; the Greek word for power is ἐξουσία.

lence of the women at the empty tomb.

It is a "Bottom Line" not just for the pericope and the Gospel of Mark as a whole, but to his theology and his point about the encounter between humans and the holy. Verse 8b β stands out at the end of the pericope and of the Gospel as a whole grammatically, structurally and theologically.

In Mark's rendering of the Empty Tomb Story the contrast is important between pairs of concerns, such as presence - absence, secret - revealed, confession - denial, discipleship - abandonment. In this story it is the risen Christ, the un-anointed Anointed One, who is present in his absence through the experience and the fear of the women, disciples, humans. For even though the text concludes in silence, the silence has already been broken because we know the story and trust in its authenticity. It ends in fleeing and fearful silence, but it is addressed to and speaks to a gathered community.

Thus the text points beyond itself. It draws a contrast between what it describes happened back then, almost forty years or generations earlier, and what is true now in the community to which it is addressed. And it is open-ended because in that community the old concerns and contrasts are relevant once again.

Also, the text operates essentially on inversion. The intentions of the women who set out to anoint are inverted as is their direction of movement, their expectations about the stone, about the whereabouts of Jesus and his status as the Anointed One in no need for further anointment, and - finally - the story points to an inversion of fear, the fear of Jesus non-anointment, of being abandoned by him and of abandoning him: Jesus is absent and yet he is leading his followers as he has done before and as he had said he would again in the future.

All of these have counterparts in the larger context of Mark's gospel and theology. The initial expectations for the intention of the coming Messiah were set very high in John the Baptist's announcement, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie." (Chapter 1:7), but in the end Jesus died the most shameful death thinkable and could not even be anointed properly. The initial direction of Jesus' ministry was from Galilee towards the city of David and capital, Jerusalem. Now everyone has fled the scene and the three most faithful followers, two Marys and Salome, are fleeing in fear.³⁸

Moreover, the initial expectation about Jesus and his Messiahship in our text is that he is in his grave and dead. Instead "he has risen, he is not here" and is spreading out as the *κύριος* ("Lord") of Christian communities.

Jesus' power is no longer in miraculous accomplishments. In Mark's Empty Tomb Story there is no great earthquake and lightning as in Matthew 28. Even though Mark does report an appearance, he does not put any emphasis on that report or a need for a supernatural act.

But there is a power that is very different and very new.

³⁰ The new direction away from Jerusalem stands also in the context of the contrast Galilaia - Jerusalem as symbolic for the Jews, the first elected of Yahwe, and the Gentiles. Cf. Josef Ernst in: *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1981) 488f. (translation mine): "The distinctly noticeable tension between Jerusalem and Galilee is founded in the history of salvation and history of mission as conceived by Mark: The Gentiles are allowed to see that the Gospel is now spreading farther out from Jerusalem."

JESUS - CHRIST, NOT HERO

In the days in which the certainty of his Resurrection grasped the small, dispersed, and despairing group of his followers, the church was born, and, since the Christ is not the Christ without the church, he has become the Christ.

Paul Tillich³⁹

The way we understand Jesus' resurrection determines to a large part our Christian self-understanding and identity, because in classical and traditional theology, and for most of us, it is "the central Christian symbol".⁴⁰

In the beginning Christianity understood Jesus to be the one whom God has made the Messiah through the resurrection, and for whom it waits to come in clouds with great power and glory as the "Son of Man"⁴¹, and this

³⁹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) II, 154.

⁴⁰ Tillich, II, 157.

⁴¹ This title, "Son of Man" was the predominant one; it stems from Jewish apocalyptic hope, seeing in him a super-natural, pre-existent being which will descend from the heavens at the end of time to bring salvation. The title "Messiah", by contrast, stems from the national hope for a king from the house of David who is merely human. Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1980) 52.

waiting for the impending dramatic event of the end dominated its consciousness.⁴²

In the following decades, in Paul's letters, and even more so in John's Gospel, Jesus' life, his coming, cross and resurrection, have the meaning of eschatological events, i. e. they are already part of the events of the end of time;⁴³ For Paul Jesus' resurrection is the beginning of the eschatological general resurrection:

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:22f.)

⁴² ibid., 46.

Some have argued that it was for this reason that Paul recommended to the unmarried and the widows to remain single (1 Corinthians 7:8) because he might have thought that there was not enough time to marry and have children until Jesus' return. Bultmann states that this coming which early Christianity was waiting for, was not the return of the Messiah, but his coming as the Messiah; i. e., for early Christianity Jesus' past life on earth was not yet messianic.

⁴³ cf. ibid., 37-39.

An example of a contemporary theological evaluation of the resurrection as proleptic eschatological event can be found in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus - God and Man* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), chapter 3/II. The significance of Jesus' resurrection is summed up: 1. If Jesus has been raised, then the end of the world has begun. 2. If Jesus has been raised, this for a Jew can only mean that God himself has confirmed the pre-Easter activity of Jesus. 3. Through his resurrection from the dead, Jesus moved so close to the "Son of Man" that the insight became obvious: the Son of Man is none other than the man Jesus who will come again. Etc.

Still, waiting for the "Second Coming of Christ" is a major belief of Christian tradition. This doctrine offers the most tangible notion of Jesus as the one who will be victorious in the end over all powers as he has already been victorious over death (1 Corinthians 15:54). For those who hold to God's unlimited power, Jesus will be restored to God's equal almighty rule, when "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Philippians 2:10-11a), and when comes true what is affirmed in the Apostles' Creed: "From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead".

For many Christians this doctrine functions as the assertion of God's ultimate authority and power over people, to which in the end everyone will have to succumb, "whether they like it or not", as I have heard said.

If this were the only way to understand Jesus' resurrection, then our universe would indeed be constructed ultimately as split between believers and heretics, between heaven and hell, between those who take sides with Jesus and those who take sides against him, between good and evil, and everything we have said in chapter one of this study would have to be dismissed and would have to be

expected to be proven erroneous when the apocalyptic new world begins.

Mark does include in his gospel the apocalyptic hope of his people and his time. In his section on the end of the age in chapter 13:24-26 he lets Jesus say:

In those days ... the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.

And, if we remember the political situation in Judea at the time Mark wrote his gospel, just before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D., such hopes may seem understandable. However, the saying of Mark 13:30, "Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away before all these things take place", could not much longer describe a real expectation, as the last persons of that generation were dying and the delay of the $\alpha\rho\rho\omicron\upsilon\varsigma(\alpha$ ("coming") necessitated a change in the interpretation of that tradition and its meaning for Christianity.

Today in the life of the local church there is a new quest for an understanding of the resurrection. For one thing apocalypticism, the notion that at some time the sky will open and a different reality will break into our

"ordinary" experience of reality, becomes less and less intriguing the more we humans learn that we ourselves are the greatest threat to the quality of our lives here, and even to survival of life on our planet. We can no longer live life on this earth as if a new Jerusalem or any *עולם הבא* (*olam haba*, "coming world") will descend to us soon. Without denying any possibilities of any hereafters or herebefores we cannot live interim-ethics in this life, we can neither leave this planet uninhabitable to our children, nor do we need to live our personal lives powerless and in "false humility", denying our destiny and potential and leaving everything to an almighty power of God

There is a new quest and a new language in many congregations to "resurrect" our lives from meaninglessness, apathy and mediocrity. There is asking: Besides what will happen after this life, what does Jesus' life, death and resurrection mean for us while we are here? And there are fresh looks at the origins of Christianity that bring out new insights.

And there are new insights about our Christian origins. One very valuable contribution to the reading of our text comes from narrative and parable theory. John Dominic Crossan has written an introduction to these,

called *The Dark Interval / Towards a Theology of Story*⁴⁴, and Burton Mack has applied the theory to the Gospel of Mark, which he reads as a story and a parable in his article *The New Testament as Our Story*⁴⁵. In this article Mack shows that the Gospel according to Mark has the structure of a parable and functions as a parable.

CHIASTIC STRUCTURE OF MARK⁴⁶

A	John the Baptist	(points back to old story expectations)
B	JESUS IS BAPTIZED	(mythic "transition")
C	Temptation	(encounter with demonic)
D	Call of Disciples	(positive response)
E	Teaching in Synagogue	(cleansing)
F	Mission in Galilee (power)	
G	JESUS' TRANSFIGURATION	
F'	Way to Jerusalem	(passion)
E'	Cleansing the Temple	(teaching)
D'	Response of Disciples	(negative response)
C'	Temptation and Trial	(encounter with authorities)
B'	CRUCIFIXION	(mythic "transition")
A'	Angel at Tomb	(points ahead to new story expectations)

⁴⁴ John Dominic Crossan, *The Dark Interval / Towards a Theology of Story* (Allen, TX: Argus Communications, 1975)

⁴⁵ Mack, Burton, "Seminar: The New Testament as Our Story," *Impact / Disciples of Christ on the Pacific Slope* 5 (1980) 25-37.

⁴⁶ This chart by Burton Mack, unpublished handout to 1983 seminar on the Passion and Resurrection Narratives at the School of Theology at Claremont. Used by permission.

This structure of the Gospel of Mark displays the same exact symmetry as we have found in the Empty Tomb Story, Mark 16:1-8, and in both points beyond itself, drawing contrasts between pairs of concerns, and operating on inversion.

"The Gospel of Mark as a story falls into two main phases of Jesus' activity. In the first half (chapters 1-8) Jesus appears as the Man of Vision and Power. In the second half (chapters 9-16) Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem and dies in darkness and weakness. It is the sequence and relationship of these two phases of the story which make it a parable. In part one, one's expectations are certainly raised, but they are not critiqued and shattered. Jesus' message and deeds are marvelous and come then as something of a surprise. ... The disciples understand Jesus' ministry in terms with which they have been familiar. They already have dreamed about the Kingdom of God and the hero-Messiah. ... But in part two the tables are turned completely. Not power, but suffering. Not lordship but servanthood. Not victory over but sacrifice for. The story tells it out to the end and not only is the disciples' view of things shattered, the reader too is left in dismay.

That is parable. And its point is to thrust us into radical re-consideration of our conventional view of things, our comfortable acquiescence in heroics, and our naive hopes for help without transformation."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Mack, "Seminar," 35.

Here is a very important meaning which has not been formulated in such strength and clarity before. It is not the function or point of a parable to give a report of events to be put on file. In a parable the world of expectations is subverted, the expected story-line changes radically so that things turn out much differently than expected. This is done, however, not in a mere attack on reality as in a satire, but with the challenge of suggesting to us that things might just as well be some other way rather than the way we expected and presumed.

Crossan says,

Parable is a story which is the polar, or binary, opposite of myth, ...it does not create reconciliation for irreconcilables but creates irreconciliation where before was reconciliation.

...If a storyteller follows this pattern, creating such a contrast of irreconcilables out of former reconcilables, a parable is the result. But to stay in parable the story must stop right there. If the storyteller starts to mediate the newly created contrast, the story starts slipping into the other main stem [of story structures]... and going back into myth.⁴⁸

This is the reason from narrative and parable theory analysis why the Gospel of Mark as a whole and why

⁴⁸ Crossan, 55.

our pericope of the Empty Tomb Story must end at Mark 16:8 in order to function as a parable. The contrast between hearer expectation for the story-line of the Messiah and Son of Man and the speaker expression as analyzed in this chapter must be allowed to be an offense to our expectation of how the Son of God should live and die so that we can be parabled into his new vision of reality, of the Kingdom of God.

Mark's Gospel, if allowed to speak to us as he wrote it, is a story that is extremely powerful and that has influenced our Western culture to a very great extent:

George Luis Borges put it this way: Throughout recorded time, he said, the generations have always told and retold two stories - that of a lost ship which searches the Mediterranean Sea for a dearly beloved island, and that of a god who is crucified on Golgotha.⁴⁹

Both of these stories have become the myths which give our culture its cohesiveness, which tell about the values and primary patterns of human behavior and which teach us what to expect from each other and from life. The story of Christ runs counter to the story of the hero,

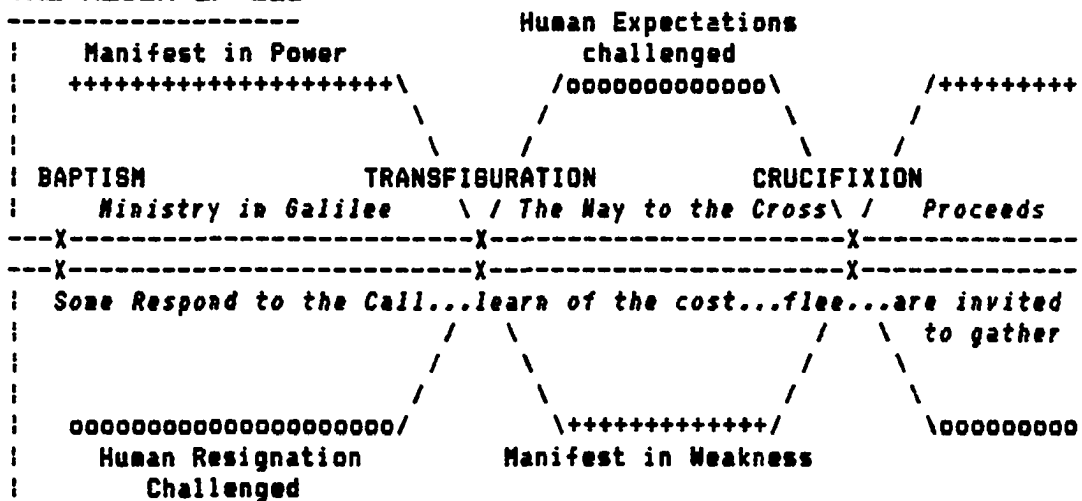
⁴⁹ Mack, "Seminar," 27f.

confronts it and subverts it as a parable. In the story of the Christ the Kingdom is made available in an act of self-sacrifice; in the story of the hero it is achieved in an act of self-aggrandizement. The story of the hero is one that ends in victory or defeat, the story of Christ ends in the suggestion of a novel option and a new way of being beyond our expectations.

The chart below shows the double inversion that is operative in the Gospel of Mark, leaving it open-ended for the reader as a parable.

THE GOSPEL OF MARK: PARABOLIC STRUCTURE²⁰

THE REIGN OF GOD



In this lies the parabolic power of the Gospel of Mark: It has given us an alternative to the great expectations of human achievement as based on the hero tale. It provides us with a parabolic paradigm for life, a story that is open to a new vision of the way our togetherness as human beings can function, and a story that confronts us to continue the search for novel solutions in our own present, to continue a willingness to invert our expectations of what should happen and what is possible even at the cost of the cross.

For that is the parabolic message to the women in the Empty Tomb Story, Mark 16:1-8: That Jesus' most shameful death could not invalidate his life's vision of the Kingdom "which is still the only important thing worth seeking in the world"⁵¹, and therein lies its empowerment, that it reveals the reality of that vision to be a gift for the many even though, and exactly because, its bearers and messengers are no heroes. At the same time, neither

⁵⁰ This chart by Burton Mack, unpublished handout to 1983 seminar on the Passion and Resurrection Narratives at the School of Theology at Claremont. Used by permission.

⁵¹ Mack, "Seminar," 31f.

the Empty Tomb Story nor the Gospel of Mark as a whole are anti-achievement stories, but tell of a truth that has been proven by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, that achievement and ultimate worth can be found apart from self-aggrandizement, that there is power available in our universe that will support persons who envision it through ecstatic fear, abandonment and death.

Our text functions on many levels, as historical report, as a parable, as myth, as parody on fear and miracles. It has been called an appearance story and a legend.⁵² It is clear, however, that Mark did not report or compose a legend. His Gospel and its last pericope are a story told for theological purposes. It is a message about a very profound insight which is firmly associated with events in the past and with the person of Jesus the Nazarene, and it has to do with experiencing life in its fullness, with human willingness to follow a vision and go

⁵² so Rudolf Pesch. He calls the "legend of the un-findable corpse with a confirming vision" ("Legende von der Nichtauffindbarkeit des Leichnams mit einer Bestätigungsvision"), its most important parallel being in the Testament of Ijob 39-40. Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (Freiburg: Herder, 1977) II.

through suffering and fear because of a being connected with reality in a way that can sustain human identity and dignity through such experiences.

The message of Mark is not captured in abstracts from reality or in morals or rules. It is a story which resonates with the complexity of human experience, picks up on its many facets and levels and lines them up in a compilation of materials and with enormous thrust. It builds, among other things, on the tension between the Gospel and people's reaction, a tension between known traditions and a new vision of the Kingdom. It is similar in some ways to the tension between the old creation and the new creation in Paul's letters, or between the apocalyptic reality of God in the heavens and the worldly reality as in Luke 2:15, or between the eschatological New Jerusalem and the present as in Revelations 21:21. Yet in Mark there is no dualism, no strict separation of two realms. Even in chapter 13 there is no "supernaturalist" bias as in the parallel Matthew 24. There are no angels with trumpets, no rapture.

This very quality of the Gospel of Mark makes it very accessible for the modern reader. Mark speaks about human experience in a way with which a person of the twentieth century can find many points of identification

and sympathy. His text and theology describe the phenomena of common experience and relate those to an understanding of the history of the Gospel of Jesus in the beginning. Certainly there are those passages which talk about things that would evoke scepticism in a modern reader. In our text the young man in the white robe is an example of that. But in this text as in others there is no theological importance attached to this part of the story. The emphasis is on the confrontation of three women with an empty tomb which scares them into ecstasy and yet is understood as more than something to avoid, to run away from. It is connected on many levels with their understanding of what is holy, divine, Gospel, God, reality, truth, meaning.

And most of all, it is a meaningful story at any time because it is open-ended and parables the reader into reflection about human destiny and the holy, about what makes events meaningful and makes experience worthful even in suffering. It is a meaningful story because it confronts with myths which people have run away from before, and because it hints toward what may come out of breaking through being stunned. It is a story which invites to deeper levels of reflection, to questioning, to sympathy, to sobriety and realism, to self-reflection and

exploration of one's own roots. And it invites to reflect on definitions of authority, direction, community and communal identity. It is a story which can become a guide for growth in crises and depression, a paradigm to overcome resignation and despair. It can heal through empathy from below and confidence in the above. It is a story which is not judgmental, but which recounts grown values and convictions and at the same time challenges any reader to overcome fear by being empowered with trust in the vision of the kingdom and in the outcome of its pursuit.

CHAPTER III

EMPOWERMENT IN CONTEMPORARY PREACHING TWO EXAMPLES

KERYGMA AND EXPECTATIONS

No one reaches salvation through teachings ... This is why I continue my journey, not to find a different, better teaching, but to abandon altogether teaching and teachers and find my destiny by myself.
Siddhartha (Hermann Hesse)¹

I have heard many people say that they yearn to hear a good sermon, meaning that most of the time when they go to church on a Sunday morning and listen to the message of the sermon, they feel short on "being amazed" and inspired. I asked a woman after such a statement, "What would happen if you heard a really good sermon?", and she answered, "I would be happy."

The frustration with preaching is not limited to the listeners, as is reported of a minister who was very frustrated with the wide gap between what he felt the Christian church ought to be and what he found to be true in his congregation. So one Sunday morning for the sermon he began to read from the New Testament a quote like John

¹ Siddhartha to Gotama Buddha in: Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha / Eine indische Dichtung* (Zürich: Fretz & Wasmuth, 1948) 54f.; translation mine.

13:34, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.", and then tore out that page, saying, "this does not apply to our church". Then he turned to a new page, reading again a quote like Philippians 2:3, "Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves ...", then tore out that page, saying again, "not in our church," and so on until the book was all torn apart.²

Fred Craddock confirms the low opinion about sermons, beginning his book on preaching,

We are all aware that in countless courts of opinion the verdict on preaching has been rendered and the sentence passed. All this slim volume asks is a stay of execution until one other witness be heard.³

Craddock also points out that "the pulpit has from the first century received poor reviews", citing Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:9f.:

² related to a class on preaching at the School of Theology at Claremont by Joseph Jeter in 1982.

³ Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1979) 1.

I would not seem to be frightening you with letters. For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech of no account."

Most of us would probably be surprised to take this view of Paul as a very poor speaker seriously because we shape our view of Paul's preaching more after Scripture passages like Acts 17:22-31, Paul's speech to the Athenians in the middle of the Areopagus, and after the theology he developed in his letters.

What do we expect from a sermon? What satisfaction do we receive from listening to twenty or thirty minutes of preaching? Perhaps many of us feel similarly about the preachers we listen to as some people in Corinth felt about Paul; despite high regards for the preacher and his abilities, listening to the preaching leaves us feeling far short of our hopes and expectations.

As listeners to Christian preaching we feel entitled to have high hopes, and we even may feel that we would forfeit our Christian identity if we expected anything less than what Jesus promised to us himself:

Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! For I tell you: Many prophets and kings desired to see what you see and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it!" (Luke 10:23f. par. Matthew 13:16f.)

Now is no time to mourn and fast; this is a time of joy like that of a wedding. (Mark 2:18f.)

It is from Jesus' own message that we feel not only encouraged, but commissioned to seek that treasure or pearl for which we will go in joy and sell all that we have (Matthew 13:44f.). Here is a solid grounding to keep alive our hope and expectations for preaching even though the weekly reality of preaching may be quite different. Again, let me quote Craddock:

Would so much time be given to general criticism of sermons if there were not among us yet a high expectation? Disappointment is registered only against a backdrop of expectation.

How is this general expectation of something vital, clear, and significant from preaching to be explained? Why do people week after week return to their hard chairs before dull pulpits to hear a man thrash about in a limbo of words relating vaguely to some topic snatched desperately on Saturday night from the minister's own twilight zone? Habit? ... This is a hope born of faith.⁴

It is from Jesus' own message that we feel commissioned to maintain high hopes from preaching, but not only because our Christian identity is a historical inheritance from our cultural and individual past, but be-

⁴ ibid., 24.

cause to be Christian has to be an event in the present. It is not enough to remember the life of Jesus and the founders of the Christian church, it is not enough to recall great events from the past and to re-tell old stories. The truth and power of the proclamation, the κήρυγμα (kerygma), of ancient times has to prove itself alive in our present. Jesus' resurrection would be meaningless if it were only an event of the past. In some way resurrection has to happen among the gathered community of today if it is to continue its importance. And in preaching, in the proclamation of the kerygma, is the foremost place where we expect that alive presence.

Christian preaching is witness to the living Christ and not a recounting of things past. This has been pointed out by *kerygmatic theology* after M. Kaehler in the late nineteenth century. Over against nineteenth century historicism which attempted to research the authentic historical Jesus and make him the absolute rule of faith, M. Kähler affirmed that preaching (κηρύσσειν) which builds the church has as its aim to witness to the living "Christ the Lord" (Χριστὸς κύριος) and not the the historical person Jesus of Nazareth.⁵

...Because of the kerygmatic character of the Gospels, a search for historical validation is methodically inappropriate and theologically illegitimate. The Gospels want to proclaim, call to faith, but have no interest in passing down minutes of past events. The object of this their proclamation is not the historical Jesus, but the exalted, living Christ, and their aim is not to report historical facts, but to arouse the living confession of "Christ the Lord".⁴

Much to the dismay of many Christians, the Christian kerygma has from the beginning escaped a fixed form. It is part of its nature that it cannot be simply reported or repeated as teachings of other wise persons have been repeated by their disciples. Christian kerygma cannot be authoritatively contained in an unchanging authoritative form, neither the New Testament writings nor a historically reconstructed life of Jesus of Nazareth nor any other. It has to incarnate anew in every event, and it continues to be subject to change and questioning as from the beginning it was supported by living faith in the church rather than any past event, including Jesus' life

³ cf. Jürgen Roloff, *Das Kerygma und der irdische Jesus / Historische Motive in den Jesus-Erzählungen der Evangelien* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970) 9f.

⁴ *ibid.*, 11; translation mine.

and death:

For the faith of the oldest church the history of Jesus was irrelevant, because this faith was based not on past events, but on the message of the presence of the raised Lord.⁷

Rudolf Bultmann drew the clear distinction between the kerygma of the (earliest) church and Jesus' message:

While Jesus' preaching was the eschatological message of the coming, yes, imminent, reign of God, in the kerygma [of the earliest church] Jesus Christ is proclaimed as the one who died vicarious for the sins of humans at the cross and whom God has wonderfully raised for our salvation.⁸

Since Bultmann, many theologians have reaffirmed the legitimacy of the search for the historical Jesus, e.g. Joachim Jeremias with his work to recover the authentic tradition about Jesus, the *ipsissima vox* of Jesus, to return to Jesus from the early church.⁹ The problem re-

⁷ *ibid.*, 19.

⁸ Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Verhältnis der urchristlichen Christusbotschaft zum historischen Jesus* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1962) 6; translation mine.

⁹ cf. Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963) 23.;
Also cf. "Der gegenwärtige Stand der Debatte um das Problem des historischen Jesus" in H. Ristow and K. Matthiae (eds.) *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus. Beiträge zum Christusverständnis in Forschung und Verkündigung* (Berlin 1962)

mains, however, of the relationship between the message of the person Jesus of Nazareth and the kerygma in Christian preaching.

Any minister in a local church has to find her or his way to give room to the kerygma as she or he understands it, and at the same time build the church, following Matthew 28:19f.: "Go therefore and make disciples ... teaching them to observe ..."

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...And He touched his ear and healed him.

(Luke 22:51)

This chapter is concerned with finding traces of what has been outlined in chapters one and two in the preaching of the local church.

Rev. Joon Young Lee and Rev. Heisik Oh are quite remarkable and very empowering people. They are among the least judgmental persons I have met, offering their full personal presence to anyone they touch. They are exceptionally hospitable, are held in high regard among their Korean people. They are also known for their healings which I have personally experienced on my own body. They came to the School of Theology at Claremont from Korea in the years 1981 and 1980, respectively, leaving behind professional careers in engineering and college teaching to become ordained Christian ministers at mid-life. They finished the full course of seminary studies within two-and-one-half and three-and-one-half years, respectively, and then conjointly started a new Korean congregation in the Santa Ana district of the United Methodist Church in

Southern California.

Rev. Joon Young Lee and Rev. Heisik Oh are not examples of seasoned preachers who have published their sermons for many years. Rather, they think of themselves as being closer to lay ministers than to professional ministers because, as Rev. Lee said, he served the church as a lay minister for over thirty years, but has served as an ordained elder for less than two years. Could empowerment which moved and enabled both of them to take such a drastic changes of career, culture and life be anything but visible in their preaching?

The sermons were chosen at random, four subsequent Sundays in September and October of 1984; three were held by Rev. Lee, one by Rev. Oh. This is the first one.

TWO MEN WHO PRAYED (SERMON I)¹⁰

Luke 18:9-14

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others:

"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Today's text gives us a parable told by Jesus. The parable of two men who went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. According to verse 9 Jesus is directing this parable to people who trusted in themselves to be righteous and who despised others. I would like to ask ourselves if there is a hidden tendency in ourselves to think that we are righteous, that we are living more correct, up-right Christian lives, that we are the examples, while the Christian life of others is somewhat less than ours and we cannot really approve of their lifestyle and tend to despise them.

Is there such a tendency among ourselves? We may think that we uphold the law of this country. We are

¹⁰ Rev. Joon Young Lee, preacher. Given at Korean Congregation, Valencia United Methodist Church in Placentia, 2050 Valencia Ave., Placentia, CA 92670 on September 23, 1984; Translation by Mr. Wonil Kim, Loma Linda, Calif., Scripture quotations from RSV¹⁹⁵².

law-abiding citizens, we are good workers on our jobs and we come to church every Sunday without fail. We worship as Christians and we fulfill our responsibilities as Christians and therefore we are practically flawless Christians who should be respected. Do we ever think in this line? Do we sometimes despise others although we would not want to show this, because if they found out that we despise others they would think less of us? So, we don't show it, but deep in our heart perhaps we do despise others, thinking they've got a long way to go if they are going to catch up with us. If there are any among us who have this secret tendency, then we should once again listen to Jesus' parable this morning.

In this parable there are two men who came up to the temple, just like we did this morning, in order to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector.

Let us first focus our attention on the Pharisee. Here is a man who kept all the laws. He was practically spotless as far as keeping the law was concerned. He was a highly respected, good, religious person. He did everything that was expected of a good Christian. However what he did was meeting the minimum requirement of the law, perhaps a little bit more. For instance, it was required to fast once a week, but he fasted twice a week. He was even overzealous. He carried out all the financial responsibilities, he never failed to pay tithes, he was quite self-disciplined. He was a successful man in his society and he was a strong patriot who proclaimed liberation from the oppression of the Roman Empire. He was someone who reminds us of those Korean Christians in Korea who would attend every early dawn prayer meeting and who would always offer a service before anybody else. And he never got rich by stealing or by deceiving others, he never did anything illegal in order to get wealth or pleasure. He was flawless, he was pious and he was a practicing Christian. He was respected by all the people around him and he was a leader in his community. And I wish that you and I would be like this Pharisee in some way.

However, there was a significant flaw in him that invalidated all these things. These are similar mistakes you and I are apt to make in today's Christian life. Let's read verses 11 and 12: *"The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get.'"*

We notice here that he begins his prayer with the formula "God". He is beginning his prayer as if he were addressing God. However, after he has uttered that formula he keeps talking about himself and he keeps his focus on himself. Instead of praising God's goodness and mercy he is praising his own goodness and his own generosity. He is not grateful to God for what God has done, but he is being grateful to God for what he, the Pharisee himself has done. We notice that he is extremely self-centered because he himself is the criterium against which he compares his neighbors and he is quite contemptuous. He accuses the evil of his neighbor and he despises his neighbor. He shows no mercy in accusing those who steal the property of others or break the law or are adulterers.

Now this is, of course, not a phenomenon peculiar to one generation. This sort of evil has been with us throughout history and many prophets spoke out against these evils in the world. And we should join these prophets in criticizing and pointing out and correcting the evils of society. But what we see in this Pharisee, unfortunately, is that the reason why he is criticizing is not sympathy for those who are oppressed or deprived, not love for them, not righteous anger toward evil in this world, but because he wants ultimately to boast himself. He is setting the background, the basis for his own glorification by criticizing the evil in this world. Not because he was disgusted with evil itself, but because he knew, or so he thought, that because of the presence of evil in this world his own flawless character, his own righteousness could shine even more. So he was in fact enjoying the presence of evil because of its presence he shined more.

"Lord I thank thee that I am not like other men, like this tax collector" he prayed. Here we see a man who is avoiding the responsibility of a Christian individual who should share the corporate guilt in the society. Instead he is exempting himself from those who are in need of salvation. He found the source and the base of his self-confidence in all the good things he did and in all the bad things he did not do. He was so self-content that eventually he came to commit the sin of conceit. There are many good leaders in this world who do not know God.

Now, the Pharisee is proud of the fact that he did not commit any serious sins. You know, there are many atheists who did not commit any serious sins. I

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want you to know that God is more interested in our interpersonal relationships and in our community of love, the kind of relationship we have with each other, than in the good things we do. The Pharisee was completely absorbed in himself, he was extremely self-satisfied, he was conceited and he was self-indulgent and he found the basis, the source of happiness in himself. He found the reason for praise and gratitude in his own beauty, in his own goodness, that's what he did. He was rambling on about himself and he was completely fascinated by himself, and this fascination with himself was even heightened by his comparison of himself with his neighbor.

There is no need for salvation felt here, there is no need for change or sanctification felt here, there is no desire or thirst for grace in this man. He is convinced that God ought to love and in fact does love and favor someone like himself, but we all know that God is turning his face away from him. His bowl is already full and there is no room for any grace from God.

Now let us turn our attention to the second person, the tax collector who is also praying. Here is a man who is betraying his own people. He was collecting taxes for the government that was oppressing his own people. He was a man who was actually more or less destroying the foundation of his people, the foundation of his own race, in other words he was someone who was betraying his own country. Above all he was getting rich by extortions, illegally. He often engaged in those activities which make other people poor in order to get rich himself. He was building his own wealth on the basis of other peoples' sacrifice and loss. He never gave anything away for free.

Now here is a man who deserves to be cursed. He indeed was someone who ought to be despised. He is a man who is rightly a target for accusations and criticism and it is my genuine wish that there is no one among us who even remotely resembles someone like him. However, there was hope for this man. He discovered a ray of hope in his faith in God's love which is wide enough to encompass the most awful sinner. And this same hope is also promised to us who are just as terrible sinners as this tax collector.

Let us see where we find the basis for that hope. Let us read verse 13: *"But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven,*

but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'". The first thing we should observe in this man is that he opened himself up in front of God. He saw himself in light of God's holiness and he saw his ugliness in the light of God's holiness and he could not even lift his head. All he could do was to stand far off and offer a prayer of tears, beating his own chest. He was aware of God and consequently all he could feel was shame in front of that God and he had nothing to offer that was good, that was of his own. He was only fearful and trembling. I have nothing to boast of, he says, I have nothing to offer, and therefore I do not deserve anything. A picture of a truly humble man. While he was looking at his own ugly self in the light of God's holiness there was no room for comparison with other human beings. While he is looking at his own ugly self, he doesn't even dare compare himself with others. All he can say is "I am a sinner". All he could do, all he could utter was that confession. Like St. Paul all he can say is "I'm a sinner and I'm a chief of the sinners" and he could not compare himself with anyone else.

This is how a person feels when he stands in front of God and becomes aware of his own sin. It is because of this awareness that a person comes to ask for God's love and his mercy and therefore, in the end, is forgiven.

Now he, that is the tax collector, does not trust in his own good deeds. He does not have faith in anything he himself has done but he only entrusts himself in what God has done for him. "Have mercy on me, Lord" he says. All he can say is that he trusts in God's love. John Calvin once said that the only thing we can contribute to our own salvation is our own sin. Because there is nothing in ourselves that can save us, we need the sacrifice of the cross. That's why we need Jesus Christ who was sent as the symbol or the expression of God's love. That's why Christ can bear such a significant meaning for us. That's why we can entrust our whole selves and all of our sins in him and then worship him.

When we read this parable told by Jesus, the parable of the two men who prayed, the Pharisee and the tax collector, we cannot help but be reminded of another parable that Jesus told, the parable of the prodigal son. Here we are reminded of the prodigal son and his brother and I would like to call the brother "the prodigal son within the house". The brother who

stayed home is saying to his father, I have stayed home, I have served you, but you have not even killed a calf and thrown me a party so that I could enjoy the company of my friends, but here is my brother who spent all your money on prostitutes and now he comes home and you kill the prize calf for him. *"Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants."*

Now the question I want to ask you is: How much are we aware of God when we come to worship him? Do we come here in a state of self-indulgence, all fascinated by ourselves, or do we come here desiring God, being utterly aware of that God. Is that why we come here? Do we come here comparing ourselves with others and as a result fall into self-indulgence? Do we come here despising others, or do we come here comparing ourselves only to the absolute standard of God? Do we come here realizing that we are in desperate need of the cross of Christ which will forgive our sins, do we come here with the realization that the cross is the only hope for our forgiveness and new life just like in the days of Jesus Christ and even today only those who are keenly aware of being sinners and those who are aware of the need for Christ and only those who entrust themselves in Christ on the cross will be forgiven by God and will be recognized and reckoned righteous and will be saved by God?

PARABLED

Rev. Lee's sermon is based on the story of Luke 18:9-14, the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. When we follow the movement of the sermon, it lets the Lukan parable speak to us, but it also is structured as a parable in itself.

that inversion in the concluding verse, "*everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted*". In that statement the perplexing inversion of expectations is released into the new expectation, i.e. to be humble.

Rev. Lee's sermon presupposes the Lukan parable. The hearer expects that there will be a point against conceit, but is invited to find in oneself the existence of just that conceit:

I would like to ask ourselves if there is a hidden tendency in ourselves to think that we are righteous, ...while the Christian life of others is somewhat less than ours.

of Jesus' parabolic inversion in the Lukan story:

Crossan cites Heddy Jason, *Conflict and Resolution in Jewish Sacred Tales* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1968) "The religious leader is implicitly the representative of the supreme values of the society and a questioning of his personal qualities or his right to leadership detracts from the validity of these values. For this reason there is not a single story in the whole Jewish Near Eastern material at our disposal which portrays the rabbi in a negative light or ridicules him."

The parable is also quite unexpected against the general background of folktales themselves which serve besides entertainment or amusement to sanction the established beliefs, attitudes and institutions, both sacred and secular and play a vital role in the education of non-literate societies.

The hearer knows that the admission of such is questionable. The sermon continues with the invitation to hold before oneself the other characteristic of the Pharisee in the story, one's own righteousness:

We may think that we uphold the law of this country. We are law-abiding citizens, we are good workers on our jobs and we come to church every Sunday without fail. We worship as Christians and we fulfill our responsibilities as Christians and therefore we are practically flawless Christians who should be respected. Do we ever think in this line?

At this point the hearer is drawn into the pattern of expectations which is parabled in the story, namely the combination of trying to be righteous while unconsciously being conceited. These characteristics, conceit and trust in one's own righteousness, describe the Pharisee's unacceptable prayer.

Then the sermon returns to the setting of the Lukan story and develops the contrast between the righteousness and the flaws of the two characters. This contrast is different from the Lukan text where the only contrast drawn is between the prayers of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Only after the Lukan story does the hearer wonder who is righteous and who is not, what prayer is acceptable before God and what prayer is not, how are humility and exaltation related to each other before God.

Rev. Lee's sermon spins out these questions in two sections, first discussing the Pharisee, then the tax collector.

The Pharisee is portrayed as a representative of the values of the community: spotless, highly respected, good, religious, even overzealous, a leader. But he had one significant flaw that invalidated all: he is contemptuous. He thinks he is praying to God when in reality he praises only himself and instead of working against evil in the world he uses it to set the background for his own glorification.

The conclusion to this first part of the sermon is that this way of contrasting righteousness and flaw is a dead end and a missing out:

There is no need for salvation felt here, there is no need for change or sanctification felt here, there is no desire or thirst for grace in this man. ... His bowl is already full and there is no room for any grace from God.

Pharisee: respected + conceited → no hope

After this, the sermon takes an antithetical new beginning, portraying the tax collector as the one who betrays his own people, who is an extortioner and deserves to be cursed and detested. But there is a ray of hope for

him because he has an awareness of his own sin. Standing before God,

he saw himself in light of God's holiness and he saw his ugliness in the light of God's holiness and he could not even lift his head. ... He was aware of God and consequently all he could feel was shame in front of that God and he had nothing to offer that was good, that was of his own.

Tax collector: sinful + aware of God → hope

The hope which the tax collector discovered, however, is not something of his own merit: "He had nothing to offer that was good, that was of his own. ...All he could say was 'I'm a sinner and I'm a chief of sinners'". No escape route is left for the hearer who was asked to identify with the tax collector: "We are just as terrible sinners as this tax collector."

What does this mean? It means that the listener is not allowed to reconcile the parabolic inversion of

Pharisee → respected + conceitful

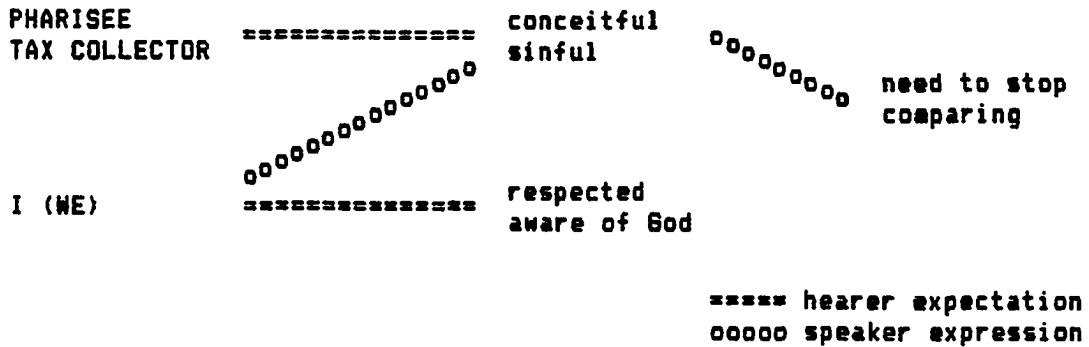
Tax collector → sinful + aware of God

into

I (we) → respected + aware of God

There is no hope for us if we try to use either character of the story as a model for our life. If we try to do what is right, be it after the zealous Pharisee or after the humble tax collector, we may miss out on salvation. The solution lies not in learning correct behavior from the characters or any other person, but in abandoning altogether comparison with anyone but "the absolute standard of God".

PARABOLIC STRUCTURE OF SERMON I



AT CHOICE

"Parables overturn one's structure of expectation and therein and thereby threaten the security of one's man-made world."¹³ In the sermon the hearer expects a parable and is invited to let oneself be parabled in one's own feelings of righteousness and conceit. This does pose a threat to one's expectations. However, the sermon does not restrict itself to parable in Crossan's sense. To begin with, the hearer is invited to participate in a communal event. In the first paragraph Rev. Lee says: "I would like to ask ourselves if there is a hidden tendency in ourselves to think ...". The translation from the Korean emphasizes very strongly the preacher's participation in this corporeal event, "I would like to ask ourselves", where more common English might insert the object "I would like us to ...".

Rev. Lee consistently speaks in the first person plural to include himself with every person in the event

¹³ Crossan, 101.

of the sermon. There is the invitation to join him and the community of the gathered congregation, yet there is also freedom for everyone to stay in the privacy of one's own mind, because one is asked to examine oneself, not before the community, but before God.

The sermon puts the listener at choice. It takes one from the righteousness and the conceit one finds in oneself through the parable to the vision of transcending the conflict between the two by "opening oneself to God", "being aware of God", "desiring God" and "worship". These are meaningful symbols because of the context of the parable, they are concrete enough to point out the possibility of a solution and a direction, but at the same time vague enough to leave the implementation completely up to the listener. What the sermon offers to the hearer is a new perspective along with a new choice, a very genuine sermon for empowerment! Too much is at stake for all participants in the event to settle for an entertaining version of the Lukan story; no anecdotes or jokes, but an abundance of supporting empathy for better ways and new choices.

When the sermon talks about "God" it is not very far from existentialist interpretation where "To speak about God is to speak about human existence"¹⁴. In the

sermon "God" is a symbol which is both multidimensional with evocative power (symbolic function of Fowler's stage 3) and also open to the question "what it means" (separation of symbol from symbolized in Fowler's stage 4 of symbolic function). The sermon refers to God not directly, but in attributes: "God's goodness and mercy", "knowing God", "God is interested in ...", "God's love, which is wide enough to encompass ...", "God's holiness", "being aware of God", "desiring God", "the absolute standard of God", "God ... the one who forgives, recognizes, reckons righteous and saves". While we have seen that the sermon does extend threat to the listener through its parabling, "God" is not a threat to anyone, not an authority figure or judge or anyone who compels us. The threat is not God's imposed judgement but our missing out on being freed from comparing ourselves with others and the relationship "in which we can entrust our whole selves and all of our sins and then worship".

While it is said clearly that we are in need of

¹⁴ "Von Gott reden, heisst demnach, von der Existenz des Menschen reden"; Jürgen Roloff (p. 23) about Rudolf Bultmann's existential interpretation of the New Testament.

forgiveness, such forgiveness is not for us as sinners over against others who are righteous, but for our relationship with each other:

... share the corporate guilt in the society instead of exempting [him]self from those who are in need of salvation. ...

God is more interested in our interpersonal relationships and in our community of love, the kind of relationship we have with each other, than in the good things we do.

While this perspective taking and emphasis on interpersonal relationship within a group seem a clear expression of Fowler's stage 3, the sermon is also very expressive of wider perspectives. The hearer is invited to make one's own decision on the basis of honest self-search rather than external authority, and truth and love are valued apart for the consensus of the own group. Fowler's formulation for the highest perspective taking, "Mutual, with the commonwealth of being"¹⁵, may not be the adequate description of perspective taking in the sermon. However, it is probably very much in tune with the outlook of the

¹⁵ James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith, The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981) 245.

congregation it addresses and invites that hearership to higher inclusiveness and a stretching for the highest standards.

In this context we have to note the references to country and law. The first thing that is said about the tax collector is that he was "betraying his own people, ...he was betraying his own country." For a Korean minister in the United States who preaches to Koreans in Korean and spends much time and energy in his ministry on immigration issues, helping people of "their own people" to find their way through the customs and legal structures among their "new own people" these statements are gravely laden with struggle, work and suffering. As in the Lukan story the political conflict which is present in the parable is between an occupying super-power and a small national and ethnic group, so in the Korean-American congregation any mentioning of "our country" and "our people" connotes the war-stricken past and ongoing legal battle of the present. In this context to be asked not to compare oneself to anyone but "the absolute standard of God", where "God" stands for love, holiness, righteousness, etc., is clearly inclusive beyond one's own group of interpersonal relationships.¹⁴

Against the background of the ethnic minority church the central point of the sermon appears in a very particular light. The problem of achievement and conceit is a problem of human existence in general. Everyone experiences that achievement must be sought in order to give meaning to our life. We have to use our personal power and creativity in order to realize our endowed gifts and recognize creativity in God and the world. We have to strive for the knowledge of good and evil in order to know judgment and know justice.¹⁶ On the other hand we know that achievement does not ultimately satisfy, bring back paradise or earn salvation. That insight is so importantly structured for us in the story of the Christ, as we have seen in the Gospel by Mark.

¹⁶ Also, I believe, the reference to "corporeal guilt" is not understood adequately without keeping in mind the impact of war. I tend to think that any nation who has experienced war believes in corporeal guilt, every member knowing that war was not any ordinary individual's personal fault, but that also no ordinary individual participates in war with innocence.

¹⁷ cf. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, his description of the Pharisee in *Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1955) 26-37; there the Pharisee is the person who is dis-united from God through one's knowledge of good and evil as opposed to Jesus who knows no good and evil but only the will of God.

The vision of Rev. Lee's sermon is clearly one of grace, not of heroism. And this must be seen against the ethnic minority issue. Comparisons with people in the surrounding environment meet different physical appearance and cultural origin, a gap that can not be bridged by achievement or heroism, but only by grace. This poem by Joann Miyamoto expresses that dilemma:

When I was young
 kids used to ask me
 what are you?
 I'd tell them what my mom told me
 I'm American
 chin chin Chinaman
 you're a Jap!
 flashing hot inside
 I'd go home
 my mom would say
 don't worry
 he who walks alone
 walks faster ...

but there was always
 someone asking me
 what are you?

now I answer
 I'm an Asian
 and they say
 why do you want to separate yourselves
 now I say
 I'm Japanese
 and they say
 don't you know this is the greatest country in the world

now I say in America
 I'm part of the third world people
 and they say
 if you don't like it here
 why don't you go back

Joann Miyamoto¹⁰

It is this conflict that develops, "especially among second- and third-generation Asians to an unconscious but real self-hatred."¹⁹ Personal power, for Asian Americans, is indissolubly connected with group belonging in many ways that affect their everyday life in the community, at work, in legal and political issues. Marilyn Mar says in her article *The Right to Struggle for Ourselves*:

The real plight of the Asian-American community can be solved only through the attainment of genuine and unified self-determination.²⁰

For Reverend Lee and Reverend Oh these identity problems are probably not as pressing in that they have come to the United States as mature adults with a firm identity. This does not imply, though, that they are not

¹⁸ From *Roots; An Asian American Reader*, a project of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. Used by permission of the author.

¹⁹ Dennis Loo, "Why an Asian American Theology of Liberation?", in Sano, *The Theologies of Asian Americans And Pacific Peoples / A Reader* (Berkeley: Asian Center for Theology & Strategies, Pacific School of Religion, 1976) 209.

²⁰ Marilyn J. Mar, "The Right to Struggle for Ourselves," in Sano, 219.

heavily affected by it in their family, at home and in their congregation. The list of qualities about the Pharisee in the sermon is certainly related to their values and may serve us to consider the cultural barrier for Asian American immigrants who seek to achieve:

spotless in keeping the law
 highly respected
 good religious person
 self-disciplined
 successful in his society
 strong patriot
 did not get rich by stealing or deceiving others
 flawless
 a leader in his community

All of these are sensitive issues for immigrants. Which law is one to keep spotlessly if one lives between two nations who have been at war? How can one hope to get rich in a highly competitive society where what is acceptable and what is deceptive is hidden behind cultural barriers?

Similarly, group belonging has a different meaning for an ethnic minority church. The preaching in the Korean Congregation in Valencia struggles with the coherence and identity as much as probably any other church. A very clear example of this is Sermon III by Rev. Lee with the title "Have This Mind Among Yourselves" (Philippians 2:5)²¹. This sermon is a plea for, as it says in the

conclusion, the "absolute possibility to live in harmony with one mind and one will." At the same time this preaching stands against a background of its very cooperative relationship with the English speaking congregation of Valencia United Methodist Church in Placentia. Both congregations share one church, i.e. one pastoral charge, one charge conference and administrative council as an expression of the desire to have one ministry in two languages.

As the Reverends Lee and Oh told me, it was not at all easy to find a local church which was willing to make room for a Korean ministry and congregation within their charge, but the result is a true example of networking.

The English speaking leadership of the larger church organization in the conference affirms the self-determination of this ethnic minority church. While the English speaking pastor is the senior minister and Rev. Lee and Rev. Oh are associate and minister of education, the willingness to cooperate seems to have far outweighed friction and interferences in the year the church has existed in this way.

²¹ Appendix, pp. 179ff.

Thus the plea to "be of one mind in Christ" most definitely includes the relationship with the whole pastoral charge of Valencia United Methodist Church as well as the relationship with the national and ethnic belonging. Thus Valencia United Methodist church can stand as an example of a new trend in the relationship of American society to its ethnic minorities. From wanting minorities to adapt it went to the image of the "melting pot" and now speaks about the "salad bowl", i.e. celebrating the differences in a mutually supportive relationship.²²

When we look for empowerment in Rev. Lee's sermon, we may at first be disappointed because we do not find language which promises us ways to "tap the awesome power of our own subconscious"²³, but may seem just the quietistic theology I spoke against in section two of chapter I. However, there is no holding back on any impulse in Rev. Lee's sermons.²⁴ The humility they advocate is not

²² related to a seminar on Ministry in Asian-American Communities at the School of Theology, Claremont, in 1984 by Dr. Chan Hie Kim.

²³ cf. footnote 2, page 7.

²⁴ For a contrast cf. Pope John Paul II: "To be faithful to the church ... is to accept with docility its magisterium" (Pope John

one that denies personal achievement. On the contrary, humility is letting go of conceited comparison with others in favor of complete devotion without self-frustration:

The true meaning of humility is using one's capabilities to do good for others without ending up frustrated. As Jesus practiced in his life, the true meaning of humility devoting oneself for others, even unto death.²⁵

Seen in its context, such plea for devotion just has a very different starting point than those who examine how to dress for power in today's American business world. Roy Sano writes:

Whereas white theologians and all who have bought into their ideas are concerned about a justly ordered society ... for oppressed people such considerations are luxuries.²⁶

The fact that Rev. Lee's sermons does not display outspokenness against the injustice of the disenfranchisement of his people in this country may seem a loss to

Paul II speaking to 300,000 people gathered in Merida, Venezuela; as quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* (January 29, 1985) Part I, page 2.

²⁵ Sermon III, page 184.

²⁶ Roy Sano, "The Bible and Pacific Basin Peoples", in Sano, 297.

those who want injustice of any kind vocalized. However, the sermon is addressed not to the American public but to a small number of those who are affected and suffer from the injustice they see when they compare opportunities in their surroundings. And this sermon does the most empowering thing that can be done: put the hearer neither in outrage nor despair but at choice within the most one can dare to hope for. And this hope, though it may seem to be expressed in symbols of a future or heavenly world, speaks to the experience in this life, as Rev. Lee says in Sermon IV²⁷:

Where we are with Jesus, there is heaven,
if it were on top of a mountain
or on a rough plane or in a shanty house
or a castle.

²⁷ p. 193.

HUNTINGTON BEACH
CHURCH OF RELIGIOUS SCIENCE

Let us challenge ourselves to make our life a gift to all those we touch, a gift of unconditional love, support and an acknowledgement of their Divinity.

Peggy Basset²⁰

Peggy Basset has been the senior minister at Huntington Beach Church of Religious Science for ten years in November of 1984. During these years the congregation has grown from less than sixty members to over fourteen hundred.

Some people may not think of the Church of Religious Science as a main line denomination or even as Christian. I see in Dr. Basset's work a very inspiring model of a ministry in the Christian Spirit which is of exceptional quality and integrity and which is a relief to have exist and be alive and growing in a way which is otherwise almost exclusively left to very fundamentalist institutions.

²⁰ in: Celebration Tribune / Official Publication of the Church of Religious Science of Huntington Beach, 2:16 (December 15, 1984), Barbara Hart, Editor-in-Chief, page 3.

Empowerment of its members is a very high priority in the Huntington Beach Church of Religious Science, as is evident in its program *I Make A Difference As ... Truth / Love / Excellence / Integrity / Creativity / Peace / Commitment* program²⁹. These qualities, love, excellence, ... are central values in the ministry of that church and in Dr. Basset's sermon. But let it speak for itself. It so happens that the sermon which is reproduced here was given on the Sunday after the International Board had granted Peggy Basset an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree in recognition of her work and ministry. For once she preached in a robe.

²⁹ cf. the series of bulletins *Adventure in Faith*, Mary Brandt, editor (Church of Religious Science, 2205 Main Street, Suite 23, Huntington Beach, CA 92648).

.....AND WE JUMPED (SERMON II)³⁰

With a title like "...And We Jumped" you might guess what I want to talk about this morning. I have not come to any conclusions, so if you are waiting for answers you won't get them today. I am only going to share with you some ideas that have happened through me and to me this week, that it is truly a Victory Sunday.

Our *I Make A Difference - Commitment* program was the most successful we've ever had, and I had such an incredible Sunday night, that it really was like jumping off, flying away, and wondering if there really is life after we have reached the pinnacle of whatever success we set up. And I tell you, there is, and it looks very much like it did before you got to the top. There is no permanent bliss I believe on this planet, because I don't think that's why we are here. I believe, we are here not only to get in alignment and make a discovery of who we are, we are also here to make a contribution out of that discovery. So no matter how much bliss we experience, it is just a stopping place along the way.

I was thinking now going into the Christmas season, that Jesus came to this earth two thousand years ago at probably one of the darkest points with a special project and that was to bring into the consciousness of the world in that time a new light, a new way, and in doing that he influenced not only the people that he touched, but also down through the ages. And I was thinking about that: what was it that Jesus had, that we don't have? - Nothing! He said that what he did we could do. And if we can do what he did, if you look very closely what it was, he declared the presence of God right where he was. He lived as if the presence of God was who he was. And out of that he was

³⁰ Rev. Peggy Basset R. Sc. F., preacher. Given at Huntington Beach Church of Religious Science, 2205 Main Street, Suite 23, Huntington Beach, CA 92648, on December 16, 1984.

illuminated and he healed all of those people that came into his light, that wanted to be healed. And that's exactly what each of us could do this morning.

You know, I was going to be a missionary early in my life, and that was because I thought if I was good enough and got enough people converted, that I would get to heaven, because I was so frightened about my own salvation. I wanted to go get other people saved so that maybe I could insure my place in heaven. And what I see, that is typical of the way we have done things. It is like we must help somebody else without first doing the work at home. We must take care of our own salvation first, which just means to find within our own selves how we are in alignment with God's love. It is there all the time. It's not something we have to go some place else for. It is only a matter of us being in alignment with that love, with that light. And when we are illuminated then we give out into the world. We make our contribution out of that awareness. And that is the thing that heals. And that's what we are about.

So on this morning, if we look back at last Sunday night when it was the most glorious thing that has ever happened in my life, I look back at it and see I was feeling so full of joy just being there. I walked in and looked in that room and it looked like a football field when there was no-one in it and I am thinking, "oh my goodness, can this possibly be filled up?" And before the evening was over fourteen hundred and thirty people had shown up and were part of the celebration and it was an exquisite evening. But I felt like a glass, you know, someone kept pouring the water in and it kept running down the sides and I'm losing this joy and I'm thinking, "gosh, I've got to recapture this". So one of the things for sure 1985 is that I want to be a greater vessel for God's joy and God's love in the world. And I know, that to do that what I must do is to give up some beliefs that I have that are blocking that right now. So in thinking then about the evening, wanting to share with you, I would really wish that I knew a way that I could recapture it all, but for myself one of Eric's friends had a home video tape and filmed part of the evening, so last night before I began putting some notes together I sat down and watched it again and it was just recreated so vividly, the whole evening, and I want to share some things that have happened through that evening and through this week to maybe spark some questions in

your mind because I believe that to live viable and alive we must always question. I am always suspicious when people get THE answer because the moment we get THE answer at that moment we quit living. Because whatever the truth as we see it, however that truth is, it is only a beginning and we can continue to question ourselves and deepen that truth and make our lives stand for more.

So I wanted to then just first thank all of you for being there and making it so absolutely special. You know, if one of you had not been there it would not have been the perfect celebration that it was, so I really, thank you very much for being there.

And then I want to just comment briefly on my first gift which was a personalized license plate and it comes out of *ON COURSE* and it said "ONE NOW". Well the kind of car we have that every time we go through the car wash, the front license plate always gets broken off. So we just have the rear one on. So on the rear of our car it says "ONE NOW". And yesterday we were getting gas and the attendant noticed we didn't have one on the front, and he saw on the one on the back and he said "wow, what's this, you got one now and you're gonna get another one later?" See, sometimes you can't be spiritual, even when you try.

So then that magnificent piece of jewelry that was given to me was awesome and it also has become a catalyst in my life for growth. I just want to say on tape and for everybody to hear and if anybody is still believing this, it did not cost thirty thousand dollars, it cost maybe a fifth of that much and not one penny came out of the church. The church itself did not pay any of that. It was all given by people in the church. I have talked to the ones I hear gave the greatest amounts. They say that it was an idea that they would not have given in the money for anything else. So if you think as I thought for one whole day, I am probably wearing that piece of jewelry around my neck which was absolutely and totally and singularly responsible for all the hunger in the world. I have had an interesting week about that and thank God it became that catalyst and I have given more and more thought to an abstract idea which is, I want to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. And I have had a wonderful week just searching and asking questions around that.

And then the doctorate, of course, you know, I serve on the board that gives those honorary degrees.

I am so curious. In five years I have only missed one meeting because I really want to know who they are dishing things like this out to, and there they were. Right in the middle they got me out of that meeting to ask me something about their staff problems and I said I've got my own staff problems I don't need to talk to them, but anyway that was a wonderful, wonderful surprise, and everything had double or triple meanings, but to see my colleagues there to honor me was humbling. Some of those ministers I had not seen in years and many of them had come far, far distances all the way from Middleden, Texas to be there for that few moments, and I didn't even get to see her afterwards. I was just really touched by that kind of honor that I received. But most of all, in addition to that, what I was really proud of, was that those ministers got to see, how Huntington Beach does it. They got to see that even talking about money, which was the purpose of the dinner was for us to sign our commitment cards for next year and they got to see that you can have fun even signing a commitment card. And many of them said they went away with a totally new idea about children of God should be prosperous and they should do everything out of joy, so I want to say that is this church's contribution to the whole movement, Sunday night will impact the way this church goes as an organization. Because what we did, we did so beautifully and so eloquently and with such class and it was so much fun that it will impact the whole organization. And I want to thank you all for being part of that. And most of them said they made a mental equivalent while they were there, you know, some people go and make novenas, well these ministers made a mental equivalent so they can go back and take this impact.

And the next thing, of course, was my family being there, it was so wonderful when you all stood up when my mother was introduced, she was touched. I think that's what broke it for her, I mean she lost it after that, and she was, God, in the whole Spirit of things, and when I walked over and sat down beside her with my robe on she put her arm around me for the first time that I can remember in that kind of a setting and said "I am really so proud of you". See, what I really got this week out of working with all the emotions and seeming opposition to some of the things that happened was that if we can love enough we can listen to any viewpoint and not have to make someone wrong. She even forgot for a little while that I was part of the anti-Christ.

My dad had been gone for two years this week and he was very evident by his presence there, and I saw he was the man that I had always wanted approval from and became a workaholic to get, and all paid off so I feel real paid up and finished with my dad. It was really just an incredible evening and all of your contributions made it that way. And they don't give doctorates to people that don't ever have increase in their attendance. So it was all of you that made it that way.

But the greatest gift of all I want to share was what several people said in different ways but it went something like this: "Peggy, when you were standing up there tonight, I felt that those were my honors and that you were just bringing them to me". And more people have said that. And that to me was validation of a dream that I have. Is that we create a field of consciousness here that no-one stars. If I walk out that front door this morning and never came back, I am so sure that this organization would continue because the basis of it is love and appreciation for each other. If we do anything it is we love and appreciate each other. And this is not a place where we have stars or gurus. You know, on Sunday morning and Tuesdays and Thursday nights I get to be star because I love so much talking about the principles that we teach. I love so much to watch people in *Science of Mind I* start making their break-throughs, start getting their teeth, if you want, into some of their old beliefs that have kept them prisoners all their lives and start letting those go and in *Science of Mind II*, when they start writing treatments for each other and rejoicing in each others' games in life and each others successes, it is an incredible thing to me to be able to be part of it. But other times when Norm is about his pastoral care it is my part to support him and his part to be the star. When we have education it's Linda's part to be the star and me to support her and Char.

And yesterday the practitioners met and they had their breakfast and I asked them each for a gift from them. The greatest gift that I want from each of them is for each of them to share their vision with me about what their ministry is. And whatever that is for them it will be unique to them because they come particularly prepared to do a certain kind of ministry and whatever that is, my gift to them will be to support them to do that and at that point they are the star, you see, and I get to be the support system.

So at least, you know, I am growing in my own awareness at the same time I am growing in my ability to love more and to support more. That I believe is being the model for the new age. It is not looking for a model, it is being it. There are no road maps to live in this age of tremendous anxiety and looking around at all the problems in the world. And we can either become part of the problem and support it to grow even more or we can start becoming part of the solution.

Now this is an abstract idea that we continue to work on all the time, how do we have an abstract idea that not to support need and not to be immobilized by all the problems in the world.

Now one of the experiments that we started with was the Christmas Families and that is to be able to be part of the solution, is not to give so that somebody loves us. See, we could give to them and we could say, "we're from the Church of Religious Science" and every time they'd think of the Church of Religious Science they'd say "thank you" or they would have other comments. But when we take those presents to those people and say let them get a feeling what it is to have the universe support them, unnamed, most of them are getting most of their income from an agency that they have to be beholden to. See, we don't want anyone beholden to us. If we could just spark in their mind that there might be another way, then that's working with an abstract idea, how we carry that forward, how we become part of the solution and not support people to stay in need.

You know some people were born in the world and think the only way they will ever get along is to stay on welfare. See, I think that we could be the model to break that. You know, we must write our own road map as we go and the only way to do that is to in our own meditation and our own clarity is to be willing to share that with those people around us and create that kind of light as we stay together to let it go out into the world. See, that's what Jesus did. He didn't go around healing everybody in his home town. He only healed the people that came to him and asked him. And then he said, "Oh, all right, there is nothing to that". So if we can begin to use that as a model in some way to begin to break down the myths that some people have to be helpers and some people have to be helpees, see that's not true. We can all be an expression of God's abundance.

And that's what I got about my piece of jewelry. You know, I wasn't even wake the next day until I already got calls about me wearing thirty thousand dollars worth of jewels and everybody in the world starving to death. And I thought, you know I did my own number, get hurt, I mean they wouldn't even let me have twenty-four hours till they start... .

You know the most awful thing in the world is when you get started recognizing your own games and acts. You say, well I've used that one for years, I'm getting tired of that. So I thought, "what is this telling me? What is this telling me?". And what I know, once I start asking questions I start getting answers. And at one moment I would be so clear, I would have such clarity about this and I would say "Oh", and the next minute I'd be totally befuddled. And it was like the Buddha who said, "Got it! ... Where did it go?" So for me all week long has been swinging from clarity to confusion and out of that I continued to search and some wonderful things have come to me and that's what I want to share with you.

One of the greatest things, because I tend to be sort of judgmental, I mean downright judgmental is what I am, and, in fact, one of the remarks that came back to me was somebody that I would like to have a closer relationship with because they are involved in some really exciting work, I heard, said, "Well, I told you those Science of Mind people are only about material wealth". And the next thing I did: "Well, so much for her! I'm not going work with her", you know, and I thought: there it is, she judged me, I judge her and then we set up the vicious circle. And I said: wait a minute, that doesn't work, that is not what it means to live in the new age. So I backed off and said: what can I learn here? And I started to listen to everything I heard, all the accolades, all the support, all the wonder which far, far far far outnumbers the others, but I never want to turn my ear off to people that seem to be in opposition to me because out of that always comes something meedy, something wonderful to consider.

So the things I learned this week, I am going to just enumerate them, and then may be just comment on a couple of them.

One is that I can acknowledge anyone's viewpoint as being valid to them without judging it. Because I really got clear this week that God did not die and leave me in charge of judging people, even though I

well qualify. So I listened and I listened even when I didn't like what I was hearing, but each time I would listen it stretched me, my awareness, a little bit more to say: yes, from their viewpoint, they are right.

You know, somebody commented because they had a viewpoint about jewelry and thought it was garish when somebody else had thought it was, you know, that it should have gone for something, you know, like twelve people have twelve different things that it should have gone for, and the interesting thing, God gives me answers in so incredible ways that Friday night I went to see the *Glories of Christmas*³¹. Now see, I do not agree with Doctor Schuller's theology, but that man's accomplishments just inspire me no end. A friend of mine is on his staff, so we always go up to his office and I look at all the tokens of things he has done and I'm saying: see, it's just like Jesus, he doesn't have anything I don't have, except he's willing to listen to all viewpoints, he's willing to take criticism and not ever let it throw him off his goal. And look what he is doing, you know, and I heard last Sunday, he is building another marvelous new family thing there, you know, for all the families to go, and somebody is saying the same thing, "Look at all the starving children". He said, "you know what, he said, we could sell this Crystal Cathedral for probably fifty million bucks". And he said "we could send it all today to wherever it is that you think we should send it to and that would be the end of it, absolutely the end of it. Or, we can keep this cathedral and feed people's needs that have the wherewithal to support solutions and produce fifty million dollars a year if that's what our goal is. If the people in this church", he said, "are willing to commit, then we can continue to support the solution". And I thought that is so powerful to me, is to say that we could just wipe ourselves out.

³¹ the annual Nativity pageant staged at the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, Calif., Robert Schuller, founding pastor; the directors of the 1984 *Glories of Christmas* were Conwell Worthington II and Michael Coleman.

In fact I read the story of a woman that is so engrossed in the problems of what she is watching in the news and reading in the newspapers that she is incapacitated. She is so sad and upset over all the problems in the world, and her own kids are going hungry. The neighbors are feeding her kids. So you see, that doesn't serve anyone, to say, "let's just take care of the situation".

There's got to be another idea. And as Linda mentioned in her meditation is that it is for us to hold the vision of what's possible for humankind. It is for us to meet our own spiritual needs. It is for us to always examine.

You know, one of the people that was giving me so much feed-back, I said to her, "what kind of a car do you drive?", because I knew she just had a BMW delivered last week. And she said, "touché". And I honored her because what it does it brings it up for all of us to look at and what we shared, and she said, "isn't it wonderful, that we have this place, that we could come and challenge each other, and say: let's look at it another way."

Are we keeping everything in balance? Because that's what the universe is about, is about balance, and I look at what I'm doing with my resources: am I spending them to the best of my awareness? And if I'm not then what I need to do is continue to wrestle with the problems until we come up with an idea.

See, this year I was waiting for the commitments to be signed to see if we have the go-ahead because there is one thing we have to do and that is to create more space and we are working toward that and after the tremendous success we'll do that. I don't know how that will be, God hasn't revealed that plan yet, but I know that the committee that's meeting and wrestling with the problem, out of that comes answers. See, God only shows up new for those people that are willing to wrestle with things, challenge things, look at their own beliefs, challenge other people, and out of that God can give us something new, so that's showing up.

But the other thing that I'm real clear about is that this church can be a model also for all Science of Mind churches by getting involved in issues outside the church about how we can hold a vision for what humankind can be world-over and some way contribute and support that.

So I called a friend of mine who is a drama coach and he is wonderful about improvisations and I said, I

know what you can do, let's have a group up on the podium and then invite everybody that wants to be involved in the solution of the problems of humankind. And what we'll do is we'll have these people dialogue, "I think we should do this", and then we'll say, "and may be we should consider doing this", and then we'll get agreement out of the group and then that's what we will get behind and support. And this person who has really been involved with a lot of social issues, I mean really in the fields of everything, and he is wonderful because he was consumed by the social issues, that he was not taking care of his own profession. And he saw it, became disillusioned, and every social cause he got involved with because he went in idealistic and when you get into it you see that there is two sides to every question, and when you see that we become disillusioned. But he has been there and he said, "I know, that's not working". He said, "Peggy, think of this, we will start the improvisation, but one thing that we support each other to do in this church is to think independently, challenge each other, and everybody that had a comment about your gift has a contribution to make, and what you heard was not criticism, it was their own need or their own urging within them to do something about whatever the issue was that they were championing. So why not just have everybody come together and throw it open and everybody say, 'I want to do this' and 'I want to do that', and then let the group be the source. And if somebody says, 'I have this idea about what I'd like to do about, something is happening to barrio, say 'okay then, what's your plan, what do you need from us?', so that the group becomes the source, and we can multiply ourselves".

So I'm really all completely excited about doing something like that because if we all have a piece of the puzzle you don't have to do what I want to do. My project will be my project, your project will be your project, and we want to support you to make a plan around it, what kind of resources do you need, and assist in getting those, so that that spark of light that we each are, it will be like a Fourth of July fireworks that these sparks will just go off and touch off other hearts, and we will hold the vision for what human kind can be.

We will write the road maps for some of those that may want to come later. See, there are none now. Somebody has said, "Religion up until now has been a

road map to places that don't exist", because religion has been about road maps to heaven and hell. If we discover that doesn't exist, except in our own minds, then we can get to write a road map about how do we travel through this new age? How do we re-language our ideas? How do we challenge each other to think? And to plan and to search for resources and to be the model we want to be? See, that's why it's very exciting to me and I believe that if we all get excited around an idea that God did give us a piece of the puzzle and it is our responsibility to do what we feel like doing with it, then this piece of jewelry will be worth its weight many many times in gold (except not around my neck, its making hurt my neck, so I don't want too much more), but it will be worth its weight in what it's been to us because it's been a catalyst, it's forced many of us to begin thinking about what it is that we could be doing. It will challenge the rest of us about what are the solutions we can be involved, and not continue to seek people.

One girl went out this morning³², she said, "does that mean I shouldn't cry over what I see?". I said, "if you feel sad, then that's what you should do, but it should stir up the gift of God in you". See, if I am one with God Almighty who holds in that possibility in the mind of God resides the possibility for a solution to every answer, then how can I be helpless? Maybe, it's I acknowledge that I am helpless first and then move on past that, and say, "I can be part of the solution".

And it begins all with ourselves. It is not about going there first and doing something there and not taking care of what's home. It is a matter of getting our own thinking, our own heart, our own love, our own awareness in alignment with the possibility that it exists.

Someone just mentioned to me the *Noetic Sciences Newsletter*, which I subscribe to and just finished it also, and Wyllis Harmon, the president of that organization, wrote this that "Peace is possible now".

³² after the first service. This sermon was taped during the second service at 11 a.m.

You know, the end of hunger is possible now, but the myth still exists, that it is not, that it has to stay in place. It's waiting for enough people to wake up to believe that it is possible now and acting out of that, that will be the solution. But we cannot form one big governmental agency that's going to go over and push a little button so that they be beholden to us. It is rather a matter of individual initiative. And as Bucky Fuller said, "My life has been an experiment", and what it is that the world wants and needs.

And if we each would claim that as our own self, we could jump off and we could get out of this feeling of feeling hopeless, we could meet together and say, "what is it I can do out of the enlightenment that I have?". Not that they will thank me and think I am wonderful, that is an awful way to give gifts, and if you're thinking about giving anybody a Christmas gift this year because they'll think you're wonderful, I invite you to reconsider that, too. Because we give only for the joy of giving to the universe and the universe gives back to us. And I know one thing: we can never outgive the universe in ideas, in resources, and we are absolutely all having access to that. "We can access it", as my friend Richard said. What we are looking for now is technology and how to access those ideas, how to access that state of awareness, and that is what we are capable of doing.

So this morning in our victory Sunday, when we have met our needs, when we have the commitment of people to meet our needs, and we will meet those, then out of the power and out of the awareness that comes out of this kind of commitment, out of this kind of dialogue, I know that 1985 is going to be a fantastic year for this group. And I am excited about it. I am frustrated, too, because I don't have the answer yet, because I want to know before I jump, but I ... I like that, but that's not how it's going to be, I have already decided that.

So I invite each of you this morning to look at your own life and say, "Is the way I run my business, is that a model for other people to use? The integrity I use in business, could that be a model? The way I take care of my body, could that be a model for other people to say, 'yes that person is doing that in alignment with the universe, has a mind for the possible human'? Is my relationship working, that other people that have theirs not working could look and say, 'I could learn something from that, I could learn

to love more by just watching that relationship'? Is my own peace of mind, am I firmly enough established in the mind of God that people could say, 'Yes, that person knows there is a possibility of us experiencing peace and if I use that person for a model, will I learn something'?"

We can all be models and out of us modeling what we want to show up, that's model-ing, not maudl-in, but modeling what we want to show up in the world, we can inspire other people and out of that strength and power we can make our contribution. It's not by accident we hear "We each have a cosmic appointment to be here", and life is just waiting for us to show up and be present in the moment. I want each of us to consider that for the holiday times as we start in celebrating Christmas this week, and to think that what Jesus did was a role model. He came to tell us, "Be the light, be the light, be the healing, be the love, be whatever it is you want in your life and quit looking outside for it because you're in touch with all of it."

Stewart Emery says that, we were talking about commitment for this time, and he said, "Commitment is to pledge your life to a cause", and look what we are supporting in our life and say, "Is that what I'm giving my life to? Because, Stewart Emery says, "Our cause, our purpose is to get committed to excellence, to an ever higher level of performance in whatever we choose to do." And my commitment is to you that whatever it is that you want to do, I will listen and not judge. See, that stretches me and it gives you the opportunity to have a safe space.

Yesterday at the practitioners' breakfast one of the practitioners gave this darling gift. You were supposed to give a gift of service of self or to serve someone, and you put it into an envelope and then everybody took one and then we shared. And in the sharing this one practitioner had said, "I will offer an hour of listening. I will listen to you and not comment. If you tell me you have a cold I will not say, 'where is the confusion in your life' at least for two days. I will listen to you if you tell me your relationship has ended, I will listen and not ask you what you have learned from that relationship for two days, and if you tell me you got fired I will listen and not say 'good' for at least two days".

So it is that support that we can listen and then, the second thing I must just mention, is after

that then I become responsible for my actions. See, if I have my goals set and you come in, no matter if it's opposition or support, it is my responsibility to stay on purpose in my life. My behavior is my responsibility. I cannot blame you if I allow you to throw me off and say, "well, I was going to do this wonderful thing, but too many people say I can't do that. So then I have to be accountable for my actions.

And then I know the third thing is that we will never do anything if we're not willing to live at risk. If we're not willing to take that jump to really know that all the answers are there, and if we continue to press ourselves, to question ourselves to not look for THE answer but to look for the most appropriate answer where we are right now, I know, that we'll all be happy that we jumped.

And so join me in just a moment of asking ourselves that one question: Am I willing to challenge everything I believe? Am I willing to listen to all the viewpoints about what I feel that I have all THE answers for? Will I allow myself to see the validity in everyone's idea and know that's perfect for them, good, bad or indifferent according to my judgement? But I am responsible for my own behavior. I am responsible for the visions I hold in my mind. I am responsible for my own content of my consciousness. I am responsible for the results I produce in my life. And I accept that accountability. And together we can all trust that there is within each of us the answer that's appropriate for us, and if we all live at risk from this commitment, then the world's problems start to become the world's solutions. And we will know that it is perfect that we're here together. It is perfect, everything that has happened in our lives. And we accept that as the truth as we move into 1985, and a feeling of exhilaration and excitement because some way in the cosmic plan of things God has brought us to this point and this place in time, and given us all these wonderful ideas which to discuss, which to ferret through, which to challenge and question. Because it is the only way to live, fully, magnificently, and lovingly. And so it is. Amen.

Dr. Basset's sermon overflows with aliveness, ideas, information, emotions, theology, excitement. The movement of the sermon feeds off the many events it refers to and reflects about, events from the life of the church and events in her personal life which are connected with the church. Over a dozen events are related and commented on, beginning with the I Make A Difference - Commitment program and the Adventure in Faith Banquet Celebration of the previous Sunday night, the gift, the doctorate, the practitioner's breakfast, the Christmas Families Project, and on and on. This sermon is very evidently a part of a very alive church and it connects with the congregation on those many points of aliveness.

The theology and concepts which are important to the preacher and related in the sermon are very articulate and the sermon speaks for itself. For the purposes of this study I only want to call attention to a few of the salient features.

A GREATER VESSEL FOR GOD'S JOY AND GOD'S LOVE

Dr. Basset's address is a celebration. It is not supportive of people who feel underprivileged or oppressed and want to fight the injustice of others. It aims at those who want to examine the range of choices they actually have and who are willing to be responsible for the choices they make. Nowhere does the sermon draw distinctions between moral qualities of different people. There are no "good people" or "bad people", only different viewpoints all of which are also neither good nor bad but valid to the person who holds them:

I can acknowledge anyone's viewpoint as being valid to them without judging it.

"Judgmentalness" is to be overcome in favor of being able to listen to everyone and recognize the contribution:

Everybody that had a comment about your gift has a contribution to make, and what you heard was not criticism, it was their own need or their own urging within them to do something about whatever the issue was that they were championing.

Because of this conviction she can say:

I never want to turn my ear off to people that seem to be in opposition to me because out of that

always comes something meedy, something wonderful to consider.

This is a genuine example of someone with a workable definition of the power of receptiveness! And this receptive power is not presented as a theory or ideal, but in its living forms and with the freedom of the speaker to joke about her own judgmentalness:

I really got clear this week that God did not die and leave me in charge of judging people, even though I well qualify.

Basset says,

I want to be a greater vessel for God's joy and God's love in the world,

and what gets in the way of that is not lack of God's presence or the injustice of others. God's love is present abundantly, "it is there all the time". The issue is "to find within our own selves how we are in alignment with God's love" and to let go of one's self-impediments: "to do that what I must do is to give up some beliefs that I have that are blocking that right now."

The sermon is full of celebration of personal and communal accomplishments. The extensive treatment of the feelings and discussion around the expensive piece of

jewelry deal with personal guilt over success and recognition as well as with theological questions about the meaning of wealth and success in relation to personal enjoyment and missional concern for others.

This celebration of accomplishment, however, is not without an understanding of humility. Basset uses that word in the sentence,

... to see my colleagues there to honor me was humbling.

This quote belongs together with her statement,

But the greatest gift of all I want to share was what several people said in different ways but it went something like this: "Peggy, when you were standing up there tonight, I felt that those were my honors and that you were just bringing them to me". And more people have said that. And that to me was validation of a dream that I have. Is that we create a field of consciousness here that no-one stars. If I walk out that front door this morning and never came back, I am so sure that this organization would continue because the basis of it is love and appreciation for each other. If we do anything it is we love and appreciate each other. And this is not a place where we have stars or gurus.

And she continues describing how starring is a revolving event for everyone in the community to have a chance to shine and for the others to support that.

I AM ONLY GOING TO SHARE WITH YOU SOME IDEAS

Dr. Basset announces at the beginning of her sermon that she is "only going to share some ideas" with the congregation. Such sharing of hers is an expression of the mutuality of her relationship with the people in her audience. The *locus of authority* in this relationship is very clearly neither external nor internal in her or anyone else's own judgement (e.g., a guru or star), but inter-relational. In Fowler's terms it is best described by the locus of authority as in stage five:

Dialectical joining of judgement-experience processes with reflective claims of others and of various expressions of cumulative human wisdom.³³

Perhaps because of the inter-relational nature of this "judgement-experience process" Basset can affirm so strongly the need to challenge each other:

...We have this place, that we could come and challenge each other, and say: let's look at it another way. ...

See, God only shows up new for those people that are willing to wrestle with things, challenge things,

³³ Fowler, 245.

look at their own beliefs, challenge other people, and out of that God can give us something new. ...

One thing that we support each other to do in this church is to think independently, challenge each other. ...

How do we challenge each other to think? And to plan and to search for resources and to be the model we want to be? See, that's why it's very exciting to me and I believe that if we all get excited around an idea that God did give us a piece of the puzzle and it is our responsibility to do what we feel like doing with it. ...

And we accept that as the truth as we move into 1985, and a feeling of exhilaration and excitement because some way in the cosmic plan of things God has brought us to this point and this place in time, and given us all these wonderful ideas which to discuss, which to ferret through, which to challenge and question. Because it is the only way to live, fully, magnificently, and lovingly.

Such challenging happens in sharing one's honest feelings and criticisms=contribution, one's piece of the puzzle, as in any of the conversations she cites, be it with her friend on Dr. Schuller's staff or with the person who commented about her jewelry, or even with herself, as she tells about her own judgmentalness:

You know the most awful thing in the world is when you get started recognizing your own games and acts.

James Fowler states among the central structural features of Conjunctive Faith (Stage 5):

Symbolic power is reunited with conceptual meanings. ...There must be an opening to the voices of one's "deeper self." Importantly, this involves a

critical recognition of one's social unconscious - the myths, ideal images and prejudices built deeply into the self-system by virtue of one's nurture within a particular social class, religious tradition, ethnic group or the like. ...

Stage 5 ...[is] alive to paradox and the truth in apparent contradictions ... it generates and maintains vulnerability to the strange truths of those who are "other". [It is] ready for closeness to that which is different and threatening to self and outlook.

All of these are appropriate descriptions of Dr. Basset's address. It says,

There is no permanent bliss. ...no matter how much bliss we experience, it is just a stopping place along the way. ...I am always suspicious when people get THE answer because the moment we get THE answer at that moment we quit living. Because whatever the truth as we see it, however that truth is, it is only a beginning.

BECOME PART OF THE SOLUTION

This is another one of the most empowering features of the sermon, the invitation for people to approach problems which exceed the range of interpersonal relationships not by delegating to others but by claiming belonging. This is a form of true networking of individuals. This approach suggests no identification with other people or with a group and no allegiance to any institution. There is no call to support an undertaking of others

because they have been sanctioned by authority figures or group decisions. There is only invitation to take seriously the impact an individual does make one way or the other, and to structure that according to one's own judgment, or, if so agreed, according to a conjoint effort as was done in the Christmas Family Project.

To be part of the solution rather than the problem may not even require any effort or action, but it does call for "alignment" of one's impact with one's vision.

"Alignment" is an important term in the sermon:

We are here not only to get in alignment and make a discovery of who we are, we are also here to make a contribution out of that discovery. ...

We must take care of our own salvation first, which just means to find within our own selves how we are in alignment with God's love. It is there all the time. It's not something we have to go some place else for. It is only a matter of us being in alignment with that love, with that light. And when we are illumined then we give out into the world. We make our contribution out of that awareness. And that is the thing that heals. And that's what we are about.

I...say, "I can be part of the solution", and it begins all with ourselves. It is not about going there first and doing something there and not taking care of what's home. It is a matter of getting our own thinking, our own heart, our own love, our own awareness in alignment with the possibility that it exists.

From these quotes it is clear that alignment is a quality beyond conformity. Alignment is with God's love, with "that" love and light, with a possibility. To be in alignment is to have an awareness.

This is reminiscent of Rev. Lee's belief in "an absolute possibility to live in harmony with one mind and one will" and which one mind he calls "the mind of Jesus Christ."³⁴ It is a harmony which is very powerful without coercion. As such it is also reminiscent of some remarks Marilyn Ferguson makes about forms of harmony in *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, about people who

cooperate with events rather than controlling them or suffering by them, much as an aikido master augments his strength by aligning himself with the existing forces, even the ones in opposition.³⁵

Ferguson also gives two very powerful arguments for a harmony in a higher awareness from biological research. One is about Meditation, chanting, and similar techniques which increase the coherence and harmony in brainwave patterns and

which suggest that higher order is achieved. On occasion it appears that increasing populations of nerve cells are recruited into the rhythm, until all regions of the brain seem to be throbbing, as if choreographed and orchestrated.³⁶

³⁴ in: SERMON III, "Have This Mind Among Yourselves", pp 179ff.

³⁵ Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy / Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980's* (Los Angeles: Tarcher, 1980) 108.

³⁶ *ibid.*, 79.

Her other argument comes from research about behavior of the flattid bug.

In *African Genesis* Robert Ardrey recounted an incident in Kenya when Louis Leakey pointed out to him what appeared to be a coral-colored flower made up of many small blossoms, like a hyacinth. On close inspection, each oblong "blossom" turned out to be the wing of an insect. These, said Leakey, were flattid bugs.

Startled, Ardrey remarked that this was certainly a striking instance of protective imitation in nature. Leakey listened, looking amused, then explained that the coral flower "imitated" by the flattid bug does not exist in nature. Furthermore, each batch of eggs laid by the female includes at least one flattid bug with green wings, not coral, and several with wings of in-between shades.

"I looked closely. At the tip of the insect flower was a single green bud. Behind it were half a dozen partially matured blossoms showing only strains of coral. Behind these on the twig crouched the full strength of flattid bug society, all with wings of purest coral to complete the colony's creation and deceive the eyes of the hungriest of birds. ...

But still my speechlessness had not reached its most vacant, brain-numbed moment. Leakey shook the stick. The startled colony rose from its twig and filled the air with fluttering flattid bugs....Then they returned to their twig. They alighted in no particular order and for an instant, the twig was alive with the little creatures climbing over each other's shoulders in what seemed to be random movement. But the movement was not random. Shortly the twig was still and one beheld again the flower."

How had the flattid bugs evolved so? How do they know their respective places, crawling over one another to get into position, like schoolchildren taking their places for a Christmas pageant?

Colin Wilson suggested that there is not only communal consciousness among the bugs but their very existence is due to a telepathic connection. The flattid-bug community is, in a sense, a single individual, a single mind, whose genes were influenced by its collective need.³⁷

All of these point to what has long been insisted on in Eastern culture: that higher awareness and forms of consciousness are not a gimmick but a widely neglected reality.³⁸ Thus Basset says about Jesus in the sermon:

That's what Jesus did. He didn't go around healing everybody in his home town. He only healed the people that came to him and asked him. And then he said, "Oh, all right, there is nothing to that". So if we can begin to use that as a model in some way to begin to break down the myths that some people have to be helpers and some people have to be helpees, see that's not true. We can all be an expression of God's abundance.

Much more could be said, but these comments may suffice for this study.³⁹

³⁷ ibid., 161f.; emphasis mine.

³⁸ cf. *Scientific Evaluation of Higher Meditative States*, in: Swami Rama, Rudolph Ballentine, and Swami Ajaya (Allan Weinstock) *Yoga and Psychotherapy / The Evolution of Consciousness* (Honesdale, PA: Himalayan International Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy, 1976) 157-160.

³⁹ The quote on the following page is from Benjamin Hoff *The Tao of Pooh* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982) 158.

*When you do the things that you can do, you will
find the Way and the Way will follow you.*
Benjamin Hoff

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APPENDIX

ADDITIONAL SERMONS

SERMON III

"Have This Mind Among Yourselves"

Rev. Joon Young Lee, preacher

Given at Korean Congregation,

Valencia United Methodist Church in Placentia,

2050 Valencia Ave., Placentia, CA 92670

on September 30, 1984.

Translation by Rev. Kun Kap Cho, Upland, Calif.

Scripture quotations from RSV¹⁹⁸²

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.

Philippians 2:1-9

HAVE THIS MIND AMONG YOURSELVES

(Philippians 2:1-12; Matthew 21:28-32)

Before I preach today's sermon let me explain to you something about the selection of Scripture readings. In the mainstream denominations of the U. S. there is a lectionary that has selected readings from the Old Testament and the New Testament for three years. Following this lectionary seems quite difficult, but we will use it in our church from this Sunday on, unless something different is selected which God gives us day by day through the Holy Spirit.

Usually the lectionary gives two readings from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament, but we will use only one from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament. At first I know you are not

used to Scripture readings from the lectionary, but if you think this lectionary comes from the work of the Holy Spirit you will be inspired through these lectionary sermons. I take Philippians, chapter 2, as today's Scripture.

The church at Philippi was the receiver of the letter to the Philippians and it had a special relationship with the apostle Paul.

As you know very well Paul took a second trip through Asia Minor. When he arrived at the city named Troa, located on the west shore of Asia Minor, he had a vision in which the people of Macedonia asked him to come to Philippi to help them. Paul thought that it was God's will to go there in Greece and so he built the first church in Europe, which was the church at Philippi.

Macedonia is located in the northern part of Greece. If we compare its geography with the Korean peninsula, Macedonia is tantamount to Won San in Korea.

The church that Paul built in Europe was an avantgarde for world mission. Because of this it was very significant for him. We have to know that Paul was arrested there and put in prison because of his preaching and missionary work, but God opened the doors of the prison with an earthquake and through this event the captain of the prison guard was saved. So Paul had a deep affection for the church of Philippi and was supported by them in his missionary activity with prayers and financial aid. All of this we need to keep in mind as we hear this sermon.

The city of Philippi was named after the emperor Philip, the father of Alexander who rebuilt the city during his regency.

When Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians he was under a restraining order by the authorities, not in prison but with little freedom to preach the Gospel, but he wrote this letter with joy and we call it the Letter of Joy. Despite its shortness it repeats the word joy many times and is filled abundantly with joy and Paul delivered this letter through a person who came from Philippi to help him.

In chapter 1 Paul wrote about his life, emphasizing that his life had been sustained by faith in Christ who lived in him. In chapter 2 he applied this novel faith to the trivial conflict in the church of Philippi and exhorted them with poetic expression. In

chapter 3 he compared his old, law oriented life with the new life in Christ. In chapter 4 he exhorts the Philippians to a life of prayer and the Christian responsibility to confess that one can do all things in him who strengthens us.

In the first part of chapter 2, our Scripture for today, Paul gives special encouragement to the Philippians to have the same minds with the same love and to be in full accord and of one mind.

He encouraged them in this way because he noticed that there was a quarrel between two women named Euodia and Syntyche who were enthusiastic believers. Even though this quarrel was a trivial one from the start, the discord brought about by it was a threat to the newly sprouted church.

Such trivial things could be a threat not only to the church of Philippi but also to a healthy, growing church and therefore discord in the life of the church and conflict between believers cannot be ignored.

Paul found three causes of this conflict.

Firstly, there was selfish desire as a cause of the discord in the church. This selfish desire comes from wanting to be elevated to a higher position in the organization of the church instead of wanting the church to be successful in its activities. Famous persons in the history of the church often tended to avoid jobs of higher ranking while persons instigating conflict for the sake of higher position may be concerned with trivial things.

There is the example of Bishop Ambrose, the famous church father of the 4th century A.D., a good theologian and administrator and the first to write an exegetical commentary for preaching, also called the father of the poor. When the bishop in his area died a council was called to elect a new bishop and the majority supported Ambrose to be the new bishop. But Ambrose ran away at night, thinking that he was not capable of filling that office. Only later could the church and even the emperor persuade him to become the bishop of Milano.

As you know, Bishop Ambrose has a story concerning Saint Augustin. When St. Augustine's mother asked Ambrose, who was in charge of the area where Augustin lived to help persons to be good, Ambrose replied that the son of tears had never perished.

We see how this famous man tried to avoid a high

ranking position. Instead he devoted himself to the will of God with a humble mind.

A second cause of discord in the church is false desire for one's own advancement of reputation rather than the glory of God.

It is a fact that people seek social reputation after they have solved the problem of survival. But Christians need to encourage their neighbors to follow God's will instead of getting attention on themselves through good works and service. Their work is not theirs but God's. The task of Christians is to lure people to follow God's will through their good work and service.

Thirdly, discord in the church comes from self-centered minds. A self-centered mind will grow hatred toward others and make conflict with others and quarrel with them. The person who has a self-centered mind tends to think that life is competition. Therefore, when they have relationships with others they think of them as competitors and rivals to be overcome and thrashed. Thus one does harm to others and ignores them rather than helping them.

From this we see that where selfish desire, selfish reputation and a self-centered mind are at work in our life, the church cannot be in harmony.

But we don't have to focus on the negative side of this problem when we try to keep ourselves from the effects of negative affairs. It is not wise to have all our concern caught up in the negative side.

Here is a story about this. The Braves and the Yankees had a competition in the World Series. Warren Spahn as the pitcher threw the ball when Elston Howard of the Yankees was batting. At that time the coach of the Braves gave a signal to Spahn to watch out not to throw a ball high outside because Elston Howard, the batter, usually hit a ball in that course very well and he gave that signal again and again. The pitcher Spahn began to concentrate on this signal in order to avoid throwing in the course of an outside high ball. But when he threw the ball he threw it in the course of an outside high ball because of his heavy concentration on that course. So the batter hit a home run.

The same is true for us. If we are intensely concerned with practicing our good positive things, we actually do negative things.

Paul has a wisdom for avoiding this pitfall. He suggests that we emphasize positive things instead of focusing on the negative side in our work.

Let me read today's Scripture, Philippians 2:2-4: *Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interest of others.*

This Scripture is positive, constructive and remedial. There are only two negatively phrased exhortations: Do nothing from selfishness or conceit. All others are positive.

Yes, the most precious thing in the life of a family, church or any community is being in full accord. There is a praiseful saying that has been handed down to us through the centuries: *Ga wha man sa sung*. That means: everything will be well if the family is in harmony and accord. I believe, if our church is in harmony, everything will be fine, with the help of God.

But now, here is a problem: How many people are in harmony when each person has his or her own mind and way of thinking?

There is a secret panacea for this problem. Paul gave us a clear resolution about it: *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus*. He persuades us to have the mind of Jesus. The secret panacea for harmony is for everyone to have the mind of Jesus. In place of each one's mind Paul teaches us to have the mind of Christ Jesus. Paul said in Romans 8:9: *Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him*. If we as believers have true faith, then the Spirit of Jesus should be in us. When the Spirit of Christ is in us, the mind of Christ is also with us.

What is the mind of Christ?

The apostle Paul explains this more exclusively in the second half of verse 6 and the following: *Though he was in the form of God, Jesus Christ did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. The mind of Jesus is humility. Though he was in the form of God he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant. He was born in a stable, he washed his disciples' feet, and obeyed God's will unto death on a cross. Jesus' mind is humility itself.*

I hope you don't misunderstand the meaning of humility. Humility is not an act of bootlicking or flattery for the purpose of boosting one's image. So it says in the Chinese proverb: *Kwa Gong Eun Bi Re*, that means, overdoing humility is not an etiquette. The true meaning of humility is using one's capabilities to do good for others without ending up frustrated. As Jesus practiced in his life, the true meaning of humility is devoting oneself to others, even unto death.

In Matthew 11:28f Jesus reveals his mind in saying: *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me: for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* Jesus' mind is humble and meek. His is a positive mind of humility without pretense. This is the attitude in which one's self can be emptied for others.

Jesus Christ is the person who does not bend the decayed reed or extinguish the smoldering lamp. The meekness and humility in Jesus Christ should be the peculiarity of the mind of Christians who have received the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Therefore Christians should not accept arrogance in which to claim to be right, or be filled with lusty desire or hatred. If we conceive the meekness and humility of Jesus Christ, we are in one mind. The apostle commands us to be in harmony with others.

How can we be in accord when we are different in intentions from each other? Even among two people who follow each their own intentions there is no harmony but only quarrel. The sons and daughters of God who believe in Christ should not follow their own will, but instead, try to discard their own will and follow God's will. Jesus Christ gave the good paradigm of being humble himself. He said in John 4:34: *My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work. The reason I came down from heaven is not to accomplish my work but to do the work of God who sent me.*

Meanwhile it is difficult to understand God's will.

Let me tell you a story. When I travelled to Europe I saw Michelangelo's marvelous masterpiece of art in the Systine Chapel at St. Peter's. There is nothing else famous in the Systine Chapel but the fresco on the ceiling and I assume that you have seen parts of

that fresco in various art publications, e.g. the picture of God's creation in which God reaches out with his arm to Adam.

There is a story of Michelangelo working on his picture when some boy entered the chapel by chance and asked Michelangelo, "Sir, what are you doing?". Michelangelo looked down to him and said jokingly, "I am drawing the best picture in our human history." The boy replied, peering at the picture again, "It doesn't look like the best picture to me." Michelangelo felt insulted by the boy's statement and shouted, "*Stolto ragazzo!*" (Get out of here!). Later a guard came to Michelangelo and apologized to him for not keeping the boy outside the chapel. And he stood there for a while and then said, "Sir, you know, from down here you can't see the whole picture you are drawing because of the linen and scaffolding, but only the finger of God". The guard meant to say that Michelangelo should take into consideration that the boy could only see part of the picture being drawn. Michelangelo responded to him with laughter, "in fact, nobody knows God's whole providence, but only a part of his whole plan".

Likewise, we cannot understand God's whole providence. But God gave us grace to know his providence and reason and consciousness to be able to know God's will.

In addition to this, when we confess our sin to God and are born again in Jesus Christ, we are able to prepare ourselves to know God's will. Therefore Paul exhorts us in Romans 12:2: *Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.* If we renew our minds we are able to see God's will.

In today's second Scripture there is a story of two sons. One son said YES to his father, but did not do what he was asked for. The other said NO, but he did as he was asked. This is a story of Jesus Christ which symbolizes the renewal of mind in people. We should be renewed. When we are wrong or make a mistake, we need to renew ourselves and do what God wants us to do so that God is pleased by our renewed mind. First of all we should be renewed in Jesus Christ. If so, our reason is brighter, our conscience is pure, and we can read the Bible correctly and hear the voice of the Holy Spirit rightly.

It is an absolute possibility to live in harmony

with one mind and one will. We can live in harmony in our family and our church. The mind which unifies us is the mind of Jesus Christ. That will is God's will that we recognize through the mind of Jesus Christ.

When we live in harmony according to the mind of Jesus Christ and God's will, God will bless us wherever we are in our family or church.

Let's have the mind of Jesus through the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The mind of Jesus Christ is meekness and humility. If we do God's will without selfishness and with humble and meek minds, we will have joy and peace.

I wish this grace will be with us and with all of our families and churches.

SERMON IV

"To Live With Hope"

Rev. Joon Young Lee, preacher

Given at Korean Congregation,
Valencia United Methodist Church in Placentia,
2050 Valencia Ave., Placentia, CA 92670
on October 14, 1984.

Translation by Mr. Kun Kap Cho, Upland, Calif.,
Scripture quotations from RSV¹⁹⁵²

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ...

I have learned, in whatever state I am to be content. I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in him who strengthens me.

... And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus

Philippians 4:4-7, 11b-13, 19

TO LIVE WITH HOPE

(Isaiah 25:1-5; Philippians 4:4-20)

As you know the state of Montana is also called the "Treasure State" because there are many mines of gold, silver, and copper in the state. I want to tell you a story about a gold mine that was found in Montana.

Once a group of geologists was searching for a mine of gold. After they found one somewhere in the rocks through long research they needed some tools to dig the mine. So they went to the city to get the tools and gave one tool to each person. Before they departed they took a vow among themselves, promising to one another that they would not let the secret of the found mine leak out to anyone. After a few days when they gathered with their tools there were two hundred people following them. They were surprised and asked among each other who had told the secret and

betrayed their promise. But no one had said anything to anyone. They just could not hide their joy of finding a mine and a great hope for their future. The people around them knew that they found a gold mine from their facial expression of joy and hope.

How about us, do we have joy and hope in our faces too great to hide? And don't we have something more precious than a gold mine, that is the hope of life, the promise of salvation and the confirmation of having eternal life? Aren't we guaranteed abundant life in Christ on this earth, not to mention anything about another world? How could we not have a glaring joy and hope in our faces when we have such a great hope and joy in our life? How could we treat others without mercy when we have the grace to reach out to the glory of heaven? How could we quarrel with each other about trivial things and not treat others generously! Those who find a gold mine show their joy and hope to others in the way they treat others generously. Likewise we can show others a generous way naturally, because we have God's grace in our mind, even though we have gone through various sufferings in our past.

All of us face difficult situations in following Jesus Christ. We may wonder why we suffer grief and depression if Jesus Christ leads us and protects us and promises us to guarantee our future in him.

The apostle Paul suggests to us in today's Scripture to rejoice always. Let me read from verse 4: *"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."* [Phil. 4:4-7] And in verse 19 a promise is given: *"And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."*

Christian joy and hope is not based simply on optimism. It is not based on positive thoughts in which we try to make ourselves think. Nor is it a joy of martyrdom. This joy and hope comes from the belief that God's word is alive and active and the Gospel is fulfilled in our life today and God's grace is abundant. If we take a positive attitude based on faith and give thanks for everything with joy and hope as we ask the help of the Lord and endure and make an effort, finally we will achieve our dream and hope.

There is an apparent difference between what we do with joy and a positive attitude, and what we do when we live with worries, looking at the dark side of our life, even within the same environment and with the same people.

There is a story from World War II. A newly wed man enlisted in the army. His bride followed him to the military base in one of the Californian deserts. After a few days the bride began to regret that she had followed her husband because she could not endure the heat and the dust in the desert, and because her husband didn't even have any time to spend with her because he was on duty in his training. And among her neighbors were Indians who couldn't even speak a word of English. The young bride wrote a letter to her mother, explaining her desperate condition in the desert. Her mother's reply were two very simple lines: "Two prisoners looked out through the window, one looked down on the dirt ground, the other saw the stars in the sky", that was it. The young bride understood right away what her mother was trying to tell her in the letter. So she tried to find a way to transform her depressing condition into something positive. She learned the language of the Indians and made friends with the Indians. Later she published a book on Indian culture and way of life. On top of that she wrote a report on the vegetation in the desert and became an expert on desert botanics. With the help of her mother's letter asking her to see the stars in the sky instead of the dirt ground she transformed her desperate life in the desert into a celebration of life.

Some comedian said, "It is easy to tell an optimist from a pessimist. The difference is that the optimist sees the doughnut while the pessimist sees the hole." Why are you depressed, seeing the hole of the doughnut?

A college student tried to earn money to pay for his tuition by selling magazines door to door during his summer vacation. When he knocked at one door, a young woman peeked out and turned him down in one word. But when she saw him limp away she called him back and said: "I am sorry, I didn't know that you are handicapped, I will buy a magazine." But the student replied: "What I sell is magazines, not compassion." She asked again: "But isn't it true that being handicapped colors your life?" The young man responded: "Yes, but I choose my color."

Whatever condition we live in depends on our own decisions.

The author Thackeray says in his book *Vanity Fair*: "The world is like a mirror. It reflects the person in front of it as it is. If we a grimace into it the world responds to us with bad feelings and if we have a smile in front of it then the world is a lovely friend also."

Yes, this is true. The world cannot decide what we are, but we decide what we are. The attitude that brings a hopeful life depends fundamentally on a positive attitude toward life itself. The English author James Joyce concludes his book *Ulysses* with the most positive ending in the history of literature. In his book there are yes'es in the last few sentences which Molly repeats. Molly regrets her past attitude of saying "no" to everything and she said "yes, yes, yes" instead of "no" in the conclusion. What is our attitude to life? Will we conclude our life with negative words, saying "impossible" or "no"? Or will we conclude our life with our mind set in a positive attitude?

Hammarskjöld, the former general secretary of the United Nations, tells us in his biography: "I don't remember when it happened and how I responded that way, but I said "yes" to God at some moment. After that moment I found the meaning of my existence and the goal of my life".

If we say "yes" to ourselves, the world and God, we can live with hope. Let's have a YES-attitude instead of a No-attitude. We say that with a positive attitude anything is possible. Let's repeat: "YES", "IT'S POSSIBLE", "LET'S DO IT". I would like you to take these words as the catchphrase for your life. I have experienced working with a person who had a negative attitude to everything he did. His last name was NO. He always made excuses, saying "that's impossible", so he could not be promoted further. Let us be YE-believers¹ in our church.

The apostle Paul speaks from his experiences, ex-

¹ "ye" is Korean for "yes"

horting us to pray to God with joy and thanksgiving. Let me read Philippians 4:11-13: *"Not that I complain of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want."*

First of all Paul said that he learned the secret to live in whatever state with satisfaction. The question is, how he was content in his life. Did he learn the secret from the way of the Stoics in Greece or from the Buddhist teachings in which one learns satisfaction through asceticism? Oh no, Paul was content not by freeing himself of human desires and instincts, but by having a precious desire in his mind. He says in Philippians 3:7: *"Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."* This Scripture says that because Paul knew Christ and was with Christ the desires of the world melted.

If we are with Christ we never fear want even though we may lose everything. The apostle Paul praises the Lord and prays with thanksgiving in the night after he was beaten and imprisoned. He prayed "Rejoice always, pray without pause and give thanks for everything".

Secondly Paul says that he learned the secret to being in the miserable conditions of life. Whoever lives in this world will have to go through a miserable condition of life at least once. Everybody can be struck by poverty, failure of business, loneliness without any friend, the crisis of being ill or the loss of a love and find himself or herself in a valley of sorrow. Job and Joseph in the Old Testament went through these crises of life. And don't we go through unexpected miserable conditions of life because of having immigrated to this country from far East? Nobody knows when we confront the crises of life even though we live in abundance right now. Therefore we learn the secret from the apostle Paul, how to live in a miserable condition of life and it is very important to prepare ourselves for confronting a miserable condition or any temptation.

When we are in a miserable condition, the first temptation comes to us with pessimism. It is a temptation to give up one's life. The second temptation is complaint. One who is in misery is apt to ascribe his

or her miserable life to others, friends, society, the country, and even God. The third temptation is envy and jealousy. It is the disease of disliking rich persons. When we are in a miserable condition we have the capability to resist any temptation in which the devil wants to swallow us like a roaring lion. That capability comes from being "in Christ", as the apostle Paul says. When we are with Jesus Christ and receive the grace of Christ, we can receive the capability of endurance and the grace of condolence and courage even though we are in a miserable situation. When we are in a miserable situation such as failure, sorrow, illness, affliction, oppression, being criticized and being misunderstood, we can be blessed with the help of Christ to overcome the temptations.

Thirdly Paul said he learned the secret to living in abundance. A number of people have received a new blessing from overcoming temptations when they were in miserable conditions, but have failed in trying to adjust to abundance. When we live in abundance such as strong health, wealth, success and safety we face different temptations. First, when we succeed we may fall into arrogance. Secondly, if we collect some money our desire toward money may grow so strong that we neglect loving our neighbors, God and the activities in our church. Thirdly, when we live in abundance we may downgrade our life by giving in to physical desires, to our eyes, to illusions, boasting, the desire to build a reputation and so on.

Deuteronomy 6:11-12 says: *"(And when the Lord your God gives you) houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, and cisterns hewn out, which you did not hew, and vineyards and olive trees, which you did not plant, and when you eat and are full, then take heed lest you forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."* This is a warning because when we are full we are apt to forget God. When we live in abundance we should be in Christ and if we wish more blessings we have to hold on to Christ and hang on the cross.

Some people offer tithes when they are poor, but when they become wealthy they change their minds. Instead of offering tithes they then offer a pledge in a certain amount less than tithes. Then they say they are now offering more money than before. This is a kind of temptation. If we keep offering tithes continually as we become wealthier, it is a blessing and a way to express our thanksgiving to God.

My dear congregation, let's keep this secret about living in whatever state we are in with the apostle Paul in Jesus. This only secret is to live in Jesus. For the conclusion of this sermon I would like you and myself to repeat with the apostle Paul: "I CAN DO ANYTHING IN HIM WHO STRENGTHENS ME." Yes, we can overcome any temptation in Christ.

Where we are with Jesus, there is heaven,
if it were on top of a mountain
or on a rough plane or in a shanty house
or a castle!

SERMON V

"The Pursuit of Happiness"

Rev. Tae Hee Park, preacher

Given at Robertson Korean United Methodist Church,
1068 S. Robertson Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90035
on October 21, 1984.

Translation by Mr. Daniel Shin, Claremont, Calif.,
Scripture quotations from RSV¹⁹⁵²

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS
(Ecclesiastes 2:4-11; Luke 17:20-21)

All human beings seek happiness. I heard of a man who originally came from Manchuria and went to Pusan and to Seoul and to America, and he told me that he was not sure about where to go next in his life.

A couple of years ago I heard a Korean song on a local broadcasting. I really liked the verses of this song and it came to be my favorite song:

Over white clouds at the sea
I wish to go with you alone,
sailing in a white boat,
following a white seagull.
There might be a little island
with no inhabitants.
There I will build a small home,
a nest for happiness,
just for you and I.

During a colorful sunset
I want to go with you alone
on the sea
with a seagull guiding our boat
and following the stars,
trying to find the little island
with a green forest.
I will plant flowers
and there will be birds
and I will dig a little well
and there I'll live with you alone.

Nowadays Korean people are living almost everywhere in the world: on the Samoan Islands, in Australia, in Southwest Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Afri-

ca, South America, North America. Countless numbers of Korean families left Korea for new jobs and immigrated to other countries. They went by themselves or with their loved ones and with entire families. These people left their homeland behind and settled in foreign, unfamiliar lands. Why? Because they are seeking happiness.

Not only those people who are looking for jobs or immigration, but every human being is seeking happiness in one form or another. Even though one may never move out of one's home land, still he is on his journey in seeking happiness. That's why Pascal said that human beings want to be happy, and human beings cannot have hope to be unhappy. I agree with him.

In the Declaration of Independence it is affirmed that we are all created equal and are endowed by our creator with the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and that government is created to protect these rights. The pursuit of happiness is one of the basic human rights. It is one of our basic human desires that we want to be happy.

What is this happiness that everybody seeks? Can we fulfill this happiness in this world or when we go to the other world? If the pursuit of happiness is only futile, how do we obtain happiness?

Let us now consider what happiness is. According to the dictionary definition, happiness is the state of not wanting anything because all desires of body and mind are fulfilled. The philosopher Immanuel Kant defined happiness as achieved when all the desires are fulfilled quantitatively, qualitatively, and in the sequence of time. That is, when all one's wants are obtained. Perhaps that is why Aristotle once said that happy people do not want anything or they are not in need, people who are not wanting anything or desiring anything are the truly happy.

We often say *pok mahui badesehyo* ("Blessings to you")². *Pok* means you are blessed if you have one

² *Pok mahui badesehyo*; the chinese character *pok*, meaning "blessing" or "happiness" contains the symbols meaning "one", "mouth", "piece of land". From this the following sentence is understood.

piece of clothing and one piece of land to feed your mouth.

We also often use the expression of the five kinds of happiness: longevity, wealth, health, virtue, and safety from sudden or accidental death³. Other people have a different list of the five kinds of happiness: longevity, wealth, nobility, health, and having many offsprings. And for American youth the three kinds of happiness are a car, a job and a girl. Having a nice sports car, a well paying job and a beautiful woman fulfills happiness. So often I hear from American youngsters after they graduated from college and get a job and buy a nice car, that all they need now is a beautiful woman.

We often read in our papers that some sportsman signed a contract worth several hundred thousand dollars or a few million dollars. And we often hear from celebrities who make ten, twenty, or thirty thousand dollars per week. There was a celebrity in Hawaii, Don Ho, who once performed at the International Hotel in Las Vegas for four weeks, and his contract was worth fifty thousand dollars a week. I was quite shocked because he was making the annual salary of the President in one week.

Can we really be happy like those sportsmen or those celebrities who can acquire such large sums of money in a short time?

In Time magazine there was once a special report about the presidency, and in that report James Bergman said that the presidency was a "crown of thorns". Herbert Hoover called the presidency a "hair shirt", now imagine yourself wearing a shirt made out of hair and trying to go to sleep in it, would you be comfortable?

Johnson called the presidency a "heavy burden to be feared" and Nixon said a little differently that the presidency be "the most difficult job in the world", even though not quite as unbearable as in Johnson's opinion. But, as we all know, he was forced to resign from his presidency.

I saw President Carter growing old rapidly during

³

su, pu, kang ryung, uyudoduk, kojong nyong

his term. And now there are people who are trying so hard to become that president, but can they really be happy when they become president?

The professor Robert Sempp who specialized in longevity at the University of Wisconsin once came to Hawaii to interview a person named Pearl Bragg living in Ilikai, who was eighty-eight years old, a writer and nutritionist. This Mr. Bragg told Dr. Sempp that Hawaii was the most healthy place in the world to live in and that he planned to live to one hundred and twenty years of age. When I was in Hawaii I was invited to speak at the occasion of his 100th birthday. If you want to have a 100th birthday, too, perhaps you should all go to Hawaii. Now imagine that you are living in Hawaii where the skies are always blue, where there are always green trees and blooming flowers. Hawaii may not be *chun tang* ["heaven", literally "place of 1000 good things"], but at least it can be *o bek tang* ["place of 500 good things", implying a meaning of "half heaven"]. Can we be happy if we live as long as Mr. Bragg hopes to live, up to 120 years old?

According to today's Scripture in Ecclesiastes, a man started two businesses in order to pursue happiness, a large vineyard, a larger herd of oxen and sheep than anyone else, a large collection of silver and gold and treasures of kings. He even had his own musical band and whatever he wanted to have, he had. Would somebody please read aloud for us Ecclesiastes, chapter 2 verse 11: "THEN I CONSIDERED ALL THAT MY HANDS HAD DONE AND THE TOIL I HAD SPENT IN DOING IT, AND BEHOLD, ALL WAS VANITY AND STRIVING AFTER WIND, AND THERE WAS NOTHING TO BE GAINED UNDER THE SUN". That's what he exclaimed in the first chapter of Ecclesiastes, verse 2: "Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity", and the author of Ecclesiastes is Solomon.

What is happiness? There is no one answer to it because we cannot measure it by objective means alone. Even though we might have all five kinds of happiness and in addition to that the car, job, and woman, we could be just like Solomon who felt a deep disappointment.

There is a novel that starts with the sentence "Happiness is a rainbow". A young boy decided to catch a rainbow and so told his mother. His mother told him that a rainbow cannot be caught because it is at the far end of *hanel* ["sky" as well as "heaven"]. The boy decided to go after the rainbow anyhow, but as far as

the boy went, the rainbow seemed to be moving farther away, too. Was that rainbow beyond reach? The young boy collapsed from exhaustion. He was so determined to go through all kinds of sufferings and master all sorts of difficulties in order to catch the rainbow, but finally he had to give up. At that very moment he could see his hair turn white and feel the wrinkles in his face, and so ends that novel.

My dear congregation, I went over the mountain to catch the rainbow, but after I came back with tears in my eyes I thought happiness lies in the blue skies beyond the mountains.

In Japan there were once quite a number of professors committing suicide. Within a few months professor Ishihara of Tokyo Medical School committed suicide in his study and professor Kashira of Kyushu University and professor Nira of Tokyo Institute of Technology also took his own life. When an investigation analysed the deaths, they found as a common factor the insurmountable gap existing between the professors and their students. Being professors was their vocation, but when they failed to establish a meaningful communication with their students their lives became meaningless. For them happiness was a rainbow beyond reach.

The professors coming from Korea tell me that they are held responsible for keeping their advisees from participating in anti-government demonstrations. Because of this there is a lack of trust in their relationships with their students and meaningful communication is virtually non-existent, and that is why they no longer want to be professors.

In America the professors teach the students technical knowledge, but true human relationships are not taught, and because of this some Korean professors in America cannot find meaning in working in that profession.

My dear congregation, what is happiness? Is it nothing but an illusion of a rainbow? Plato once said that happiness is inner peace which results from the harmony and order of mind. Some people boast about their positions, about a house, honor or knowledge, but I have been trying to express to you that those are not the essence of happiness.

Happiness lies in one's mind more so than in one's position. Happiness lies in our inner self rather than outside of us. Happiness lies in the peace of the soul rather than in bodily comfort. I'm not

trying to say that happiness can only be found when we rid ourselves of all our material possessions, I'm not saying you're better off without wealth. I just want to emphasize that the internal factors are much more important than the external ones.

In the Gospel of Luke the Pharisees asked Jesus when they were going to see the Kingdom of God. Jesus answered, you cannot see the Kingdom of God and you cannot say the Kingdom of God is here or there; the Kingdom of God is in your mind. The Pharisees' understanding of the Kingdom of God was materialistic, external and concrete, whereas Jesus' understanding of the Kingdom of God was non-external, non-concrete and non-materialistic.

The Kingdom of God depends on you and not on anyone else. Loneliness, boredom, fear, uneasiness, pain and suffering, death and parting, sadness and tears, none of these are found in the Kingdom of God. What is found in the Kingdom of God is creation, true life, righteousness. And that happiness is not found beyond the mountain or in the illusion of the rainbow, but in your very mind.

This is the message that the Kingdom of God is *here and now*⁴, that we can possess the Kingdom of God here and now. We can possess happiness today, right here. This is not the catch phrase of civil rights activists, but it is for us, for all believers, that here and now we can find the Kingdom of God. This is our conviction and confession.

Carnegie once said, if you knew of money having been dropped somewhere, you would go to look for it, but if there is work right in front of you, you will push it out of your way. Don't try to find happiness far away from you, look into yourself, clear up the eyes of your mind.

I believe that happiness is a technique of finding one's true self in the pursuit of happiness. We all are pilgrims in our life journey of seeking happiness. We can only be disappointed if what we are after is only a rainbow, but we can have hope because happiness can be realized here and now.

⁴ "here and now" is original English

It is not an easy task to find happiness in ourselves, but the Christian religion makes this difficult task possible. The Christian faith can help us to realize happiness here and now. Happiness is not as noisy as unhappiness. Unhappiness is like a horse with a thousand bells, it makes a lot of noise, but happiness is like a quiet virgin. When we pursue happiness humbly it will smile at us like that quiet virgin.

Happiness does not lead us through rosy paths, but sometimes it can be found where people believe only unhappiness could be found. Happiness can be retained by those to whom the secret of happiness is revealed.

The apostle Paul spoke of happiness in the letter to the Philippians as of being content in whatever situation. Someone who learned to be content can be happy, said the apostle Paul, and even from prison he wrote, "rejoice, again I say, rejoice. Be thankful, live in peace and love!"

Who holds the secret of this happiness? Paul says in Philippians 4:13, "I can do anything in Christ who strengthens me". The apostle Paul promises that happiness can be found in Christ. I truly believe that only Jesus has the key to happiness. Whoever receives Christ as their savior can lead a life of happiness.

One can live a happy life, this is not only my personal confession but the confession of many Christian believers.

Let me summarize today's message. If we want to be happy we first have to confess all our sins. Secondly we have to believe in Jesus Christ who died for our sins on the cross and in his forgiving powers. Thirdly we have to receive him into ourselves. As it says in hymn 456⁵ we have to live every moment of our life with Christ. And finally, when we obey his will

⁵ This refers to hymn #456 in the Korean hymnal *Chaa Song Ka*, Han guk chan song ka kong hue [Korean Hymnal Publications Committee], ed. (Seng Myung Ui Mal Suim Sa: Seoul 1962, 1984).

The hymn is the Korean version of *'Tis so sweet to walk with Jesus*, by A. B. Simpson, 1897.

May God bless you with the possession of this
true happiness in Christ Jesus. Amen.

